Jonathan Edwards
and the
New Sense of Glory

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ABSTRACT

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Attention has often been called to a disparity between the "Puritanism" and the "Transcendentalism" which appear to divide the thought of Jonathan Edwards. This study undertakes an examination of this duality as it is exhibited in contrasting notions of divine glory. It is suggested that Edwards embraced two sorts of piety, one centering on sovereignty and the doctrine of election and the other turning upon the apprehension of the immediacy of divinity in creation. Of particular interest is the manner in which the new world of philosophy serves both to support the older theology of divine ordering and also to stimulate that piety toward experience and enlargement of vision which characterizes Edwards' "new sense" of glory.

The "Personal Narrative" has been taken as the point of departure both because of its central importance in the interpretation of Edwards' career and because of the striking manner in which it juxtaposes contrasting notions of divinity. In the "Personal Narrative" Edwards describes the "new sense" of glory which confirmed to him the doctrine of the sovereignty of God. This was the God of his fathers, the God who elects some to damnation and others to salvation and life in the Holy Commonwealth of the saints. It was a conception of God which emphasized restraint and order. This notion of divine sovereignty was to be reinforced by Edwards' understanding of the "universal system of existence" which had been worked out in the college notes. It was this understanding of God which Edwards brought to Northampton and with it he sought to revitalize the Puritan way.

If the new world of philosophy had served to support an old faith, it also did much more. In the "Personal Narrative" the "new sense" of

glory suggests other meanings than simply those bound up with the theology of Calvinistic Puritanism. The vital experience of divine immediacy points to a new range of sensibility, one associated with the vast spaces of nature and the delight of the heart. Here are intimations of a form of piety which ran counter to that displayed in conventional New England Puritanism. This was the God of "all nature" whose prime characteristic was less that of sovereignty than of omnipresence. The background of this new apprehension of divinity is to be traced again to the involvement of Edwards in the new world of philosophy. A significant indication of this involvement is to be foundation in the apotheosis of space which occurs in the college notes.

Edwards was not merely loyal to an old theology; he was also responding to other inspirations. The invoking of the direct experience of God in nature, the enlargement of the imagination and the awareness of the solitary self which appear in the "Personal Narrative" all point to an experience which was akin to the nature enthusiasm of such figures as Henry More, Addison and Shaftesbury.

Edwards does not resolve the tension which existed between these two forms of piety. In his later career they run together and often cross. In the Northampton period, it is the notion of divine sovereignty in election and damnation which occupies the foreground, although the stress of the revival upon the experience of the heart, the immediacy of God, and the new inward perception suggest the presence of the new piety. It is in the later writing of the Stockbridge period, however, that the new sense of glory seems to come into its own. Released from the demands of the church-covenant way, Edwards could allow his thoughts to move from the restricted meanings of the Holy Commonwealth to his vision of the divine glory in all creation. It is the "new sense" of glory which has the last word.

PREFACE

The original prompting leading to this study can be traced to two sources. It was the late Perry Miller who first stimulated an interest in the enigmatic figure of Jonathan Edwards through his provocative investigations of Puritanism and of Edwardsean thought. Marjorie Hope Nicolson's studies, Newton Demands the Muse and From Mountain Gloom to Mountain Glory, provided an indispensible second stimulus. Her examination of the response of English writers to the "aesthetics of the infinite" suggested an approach which seemed applicable to Jonathan Edwards in the New World. This insight has not led us to a "new" Edwards in any radical sense. It has, however, helped to illuminate certain dynamics in his thought and to establish additional links between Edwards and important movements within his general intellectual environment. To this extent Edwards becomes a bit more understandable to us.

In the course of this investigation assistance has come from several sources. Professor Jonn E. Smith of Yale University was kind enough to discuss the project at an early stage in its development. Professors Joseph L. Blau of Columbia University and Daniel Day Williams of Union Theological Seminary provided useful critical comment upon an initial draft of the project. The Yale University Library and the staff of the rare book section were generous in rendering assistance in the matter of the Edwards manuscripts. I am especially grateful to Professor Thomas A. Shafer of McCormick Theological Seminary for his kindness in permitting use of the typescripts of the "Miscellanies" which he has prepared for eventual publication in the Yale edition of the collected works.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE . . . . . ii.

Chapter I. Introduction. . . . . 1.

PART ONE: THE GOD OF ORDER

Chapter II. The Puritan Commonwealth. . . . . 9.

Chapter III. Absolute Dependence . . . . . 18.

Chapter IV. The New World of Philosophy . . . . . 32.

Chapter V. Excellency. . . . . 50.

PART TWO: THE NEW SENSE OF GLORY

Chapter VI. God's Furnace . . . . . 61.

Chapter VII. "All One Work, One Design." . . . . . 78.

Chapter VIII. "The Space Mystique". . . . . 94.

Chapter IX. The Unsearchable Heart. . . . . 113.

Chapter X. Enlargement . . . . . 135.

Chapter XI. Conclusion. 155

BIBLIOGRAPHY 160.

INTRODUCTION

The career of Jonathan Edwards has presented a paradox to interpreters of his thought. He has been an arresting figure, at least in part, because he has seemed to be the representative figure for much of what has been rejected in the course of American life and thought. His name has frequently become synonymous with Calvinism, predestination, the Enfield sermon and other theological notions which seemed to be wholly out of keeping with the new world and the new age. One is confronted with what Parrington described in a single sweeping phrase, "The Anachronism of Jonathan Edwards."[1] But as Parrington, and indeed every other commentator on Edwards, recognized, there was a contradiction in his thought. If the Northampton minister had been merely an "anachronism" he would not have counted as much as he did in New England history, nor would he have engaged the attention of students of American thought as frequently as he has. It is because Edwards has been something more than a mere anachronism that he stands out among lesser figures of his period. Indeed, there is a contradiction in Edwards' thought that will not be downed. If he persistently looked to the past to determine the dogmatic framework of his thought he also pointed away from the past. If he could describe man as a loathsome sinner dangling over the fires of divine wrath, he also knew him to be

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[1] Vernon L. Parrington, Main Currents in American Thought, Vol. I. (New York: Harvest Books, Harcourt, Brace and World, 1954), p. 15.

a privileged creature made to rejoice in the divine beauty. If he defended a doctrine of the determination of man's will, he did so with philosophical equipment supplied by the leading philosophers of the new age. Indeed, recent interpreters have become so impressed with this other side of Edwards that they have endeavored to reverse Parrington's descriptive title. One writer has suggested that the imprecatory sermons, for example, "are not necessarily integral to his philosophy, but may simply reflect the mind-set of colonial New England."[1] Perry Miller has suggested that Edwards was really far in advance of his time.

Neither extreme will quite do. Edwards cannot simply be taken for a reflection of the past because he was something more than that. As Parrington himself recognized, Edwards held a promise, although it was an unrealized one: "He was called to be a transcendental emancipator, but he remained a Calvinist."[2] On the other hand, to dismiss embarassing theological apparatus as merely a vestigial remnant of the "mind-set" of New England is equally misleading. However outworn his theological garments may have been, and however offensive to later generations, it would in fact be difficult to imagine an Edwards without them. Edwards was neither behind his time nor ahead of it. What makes him so arresting a figure is the fact that there are contradictions to be discerned in his thought. More than most men he embraced within his mind both the old and the new. It is precisely this fact that helps to make the intellectual career of Edwards as arresting as it is. This fact presents difficulties for the interpretation of Edwards, to be sure. In his effort to reconcile disparate factors, his thought becomes at

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[1] Douglas Elwood, The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), p. 3.

[2] Parrington, I, 165.

times sublime, at other times very nearly ridiculous. When Edwards attempts to mesh the "wheels" of Ezekiel with those of eighteenth century dynamics in the same machine, one can only feel that the result is odd indeed. At other times Edwards seems to succeed in more impressive fashion and his artistry is striking. In either case it is the tension of ideas which made Edwards what he was. The imprecatory sermons do not simply reflect the "mind-set" of the past; they are not echoes. The sermons and the tumult which accompanied them are expressions of the encounter of that past with new forces, new circumstances, new expectations. It is the sound of that conflict which we hear and not merely echoes of the past. Edwards, then, is of interest, apart from the question of his influence, because he suggests the forces at work in the minds of men during the early eighteenth century.

How is the tension in his thought to be described? The ordinary way is to point to a conflict between Edwards as "philosopher" and Edwards as "theologian." This seems to be a distinction that is less than helpful. It is not evident that Edwards ever engaged in an intellectual inquiry that was free of theological considerations. The college notes, in which he appears most philosophically inclined, have a clear and central theological interest, as do the "speculative" theological writings. This theological "bias" is seldom absent for, after all, the overriding concern of Edwards' life was God. Despite his interest in the work of Newton and Locke, there is really no point in Edwards' career in which philosophical concern bore fruit apart from theological considerations. The contrast between "Calvinism" and "Platonism" is more to the point; however, even this distinction can be misleading. Many a Puritan held these factors together and found them to be mutually supporting. It would perhaps be more useful to speak of

differing forms of theology, differing "gods," as it were. What these various contrasts are generally pointing to are different attitudes or ways of understanding and interpreting experience, ways which, however diverse, are nonetheless equally "theological."

Edwards spoke, on the one hand, for a way of understanding experience which was characterized, above all, by limitation. It was a world view in which the aesthetic ideals of harmony, regularity and unity held high place. Divine will and reason alike demanded that each thing should be in its appointed place. Above all, it was a theology which understood God as one who elects some to salvation and rejects others, setting the chosen apart. The world was seen as something fixed in a permanent order and essentially finished. Yet at other moments Edwards' piety seems less burdened by restraint, less mindful of the sharp division between elect and non-elect, less attentive to an "aesthetics of limitation." If limitation might be used to describe the former, "enlargement" may serve to describe the latter side of Edwards' mind. Both sides are theological; they simply represent differing varieties of theology. The theology of limitation stems from Edwards' own Puritan heritage, although he is by no means simply repeating old formulas. Its basic terms are bound up with the related notions of divine election and the holy community. The profound influence of the notion of the elect community is suggested by Edwards' frequent use of social metaphors even in his "metaphysical" writings. The theology of enlargement stems from another way of experiencing the world, one in which "nature" rather than holy community occupies an important place. Edwards here exhibits remarkable parallels to certain English thinkers, such as Henry More. These two ways are closely interwoven; yet they are diverse.

There are many places in the corpus of Edwards' writings where one might look to find this polarity. We have chosen to use the "Personal Narrative" as the point of departure. Not only is it a document of considerable importance in regard to Edwards' own religious life, but it also juxtaposes the two sides of Edwards to which allusion has been made. They come together in a vivid and, for Edwards, an unforgettable experience which he described as a "new sense" of glory. It was a decisive religious experience for Edwards, and its meaningfulness is evident in the "Narrative," even though this account was penned many years after the events described. There seem to be two primary elements in this experience of the divine presence. The first is the confirmation of Edwards' belief in the dogma of divine election. As he wrote: "And there has been a wonderful alteration in my mind, in respect to the doctrine of God's soverignty . . . so that I scarce ever have found so much as the rising of an objection against it, in the most absolute sense, in God's shewing mercy to whom he will shew mercy, and hardening whom he will."[1] In short, Edwards had been confirmed in the faith of his fathers, the faith of that people that had come to the new world in order to establish the society of the saints. On the foundations of this faith Edwards constructed his understanding of the divine soverignty and with this he undertook the work of revitalizing the church-covenant way at Northampton.

But the doctrine of divine soverignty with its various meanings for Puritan faith was not the only factor in the experience of the "new sense" of glory. When Edwards goes on to record his hymn to the divine excellence which appears "in the sun, moon, and stars; in the clouds,

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[1] "Personal Narrative," Works, ed. Serene Dwight (10 vols.; New York: G. & C. & H. Carvill, 1830), hereafter cited as Works, I. 66.

and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water and all nature,"[1] one becomes aware that a new factor has entered the picture. Edwards is not here standing on the ground which John Winthrop occupied for the building of the "city upon a hill."[2] Edwards' piety at this moment is not that which Winthrop embraced in his classic image of the city of the saints. In Edwards' confessional statement "nature" has become a crucial term. It is not without cause that the "Narrative" has been compared to Emerson's "Nature," or Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey."[3] This factor suggests that Edwards is responding to another sort of divinity, one which expresses itself less in the elect city with its restraints and limitations than in creation in all its sweep. At the center of Edwards' own religious experience there then lies a tension. There is the soverign God of election and the soverign God "in all nature," the God of restraint and the God of an enlarging vision. It was a tension that was to remain in Edwards' thought to the end, unfolding itself in the various phases of his career.

This tension was never resolved. Edwards could not, like Samuel Johnson, break with the past. One factor or the other, however, emerges to the surface at different points. The following discussion will take up the "new sense" of glory first in terms of that side of the experience which points to the God of restraint. This will be set

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[1] "Personal Narrative," Works, I. 66.

[2] John Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," American Christianity, Vol. I. ed. H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, Lefferts A. Loetscher (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), pp. 98-102.

[3] Cf. Jonathan Edwards: Representative Selections, ed. Clarence H. Faust and Thomas Johnson (Hill and Wang, 1962), p. 420.

within the Northampton period. This discussion will center largely on the manner in which Edwards sought to bring together the providential order of God and the natural order of the new science and the eventual effort to bring this vision to bear upon the church-covenant of Northampton. The paper will then turn to certain aspects of the "new sense" of glory as it relates to Edwards' involvement with the "space mystique" of the nature enthusiasts, the new life of the affections especially manifest in the Awakening and finally the enlarging vision of the Stockbridge works.

PART ONE

THE GOD OF ORDER

CHAPTER II

THE PURITAN COMMONWEALTH

There were several items of cardinal importance that went to make up the configuration of Puritan faith. To begin with, the Puritan was profoundly convinced that God was Lord of all. His faith was an echoe of the old Reformation cry, soli deo gloria. As Jonathan Edwards was to remind his congregation: "God is the highest good of the reasonable creature; and the enjoyment of him is the only happiness with which our souls can be satisfied."[1] Hence the Puritan sought to order his life about this elementary fact. God was great and nothing could pretend to stand beside him. Especially was God's sovereignty made evident in the affair of man's redemption. God must do what man cannot.

The affair of redemption received concentrated attention from Puritan divines. As they understood the spiritual life, it was divided by a sharp cleavage. Salvation was never merely an upward ascent from darkness to light. At some point a radical turn was necessary in the life of man, a transformation not of his own making. He had to be brought from "nature" to "grace" in order to be made a creature fit for a new estate. William Ames embraced the broad outlines of the story of the spiritual life in its starkest simplicity: "There are two things to be considered . . . man's fall and restoring."[2] Taking man's

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[1] "The Christian Pilgrim," Faust and Johnson, p. 13.

[2] The Marrow of Sacred Divinity (London, 1642), XI. 1.

sinfulness as his starting point, the Puritan fastened his attention upon the hope of a new life "in Christ." A sinner man did not cease to be, but now by God's inscrutable mercy his life was set in a new context. The definitive experience of grace had left its mark upon him.

In the affair of redemption it was God, of course, who was considered the determining factor. There was no way to pass from nature to grace except by God's own choosing. And yet, from nature to grace man must go; short of this he remains among the lost. The doctrine of election was thus central to the understanding of the life of the redeemed. A man was called to the life of the redeemed; moreover, he was called into the society of the redeemed. the corporate body of the elect. These three elements--soverign God, regenerate believer, Holy Commonwealth--belong together in Puritan faith and together they found their common franchise in holy scripture zealously studied and duly interpreted.

In this complex of beliefs particular importance must be attributed to the notion of the Holy Commonwealth. Behind the Puritan enterprise in its various forms there lay an intense feeling for the holy community.[1] It was this central conception that helped to provide the historical embodiment of Puritan faith. The insistence, for example, upon a regenerate life went hand in hand with the notion of the holy community. The aim of the Puritan was to cleanse the church of its more obvious blemishes in order that it might more adequately approximate the ideal society of saints. The work of the Spirit in

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[1] J. F. H. New, Anglican and Puritan (Stanford University Press, 1964), p. 43. A. S. P. Woodhouse, Puritanism and Liberty (London; J. M. Dent, 1950), pp. 36-7.

regeneration was part of the building up of the corporate body of the saints. Conversion might come in some private experience but this experience was to lead a man to his public confession of faith and to participation in the holy community. Because of this attitude, Puritans were led to criticize Anglican "sacramental individualism" and to strive to make the church a more adequate expression of the communion of saints. The purity of the church fellowship as a corporate ideal was then a matter of the highest priority.

This desire for an adequate corporate expression of the godly life was perhaps in part a reaction against the disorder of the time. As William Haller has observed: "With what ideas they could command they confronted the confusion and demoralization of a society which had been racked by the tremendous changes of the preceding century, and with what skill and force of character they possessed they attempted to implant courage, discipline and order."[1] Much of the appeal of early Puritanism must have been vested in this effort to lay the foundations of a meaningful corporate order. The Puritan spiritual life, despite its rhetoric of world denial, pointed not only to a salvation beyond time but to the righting of man's disorder in time. "Our aime," said John Preston, "must bee Gods glory and the publique good . . . ."[2] Preston's declaration suggests one of the abiding concerns of the Puritan program. The attempt to hold in balance both "Gods glory" and the "publique good" was to prove at least one of the sources for what Edmund Morgan has called "the Puritan dilemma" for these two elements were not always compatible. Yet the Puritans who came to New England

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[1] William Haller, The Rise of Puritanism (New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 84.

[2] John Preston, Foure godly and learned treatises, 3rd edition (London, 1633), p. 45.

thought they were and the alleged absence of a zeal for the "publique good" was much lamented during Puritanism's much advertised "declension." It was an ideal reflected in the comprehensive goal of the Puritan fathers who set foot on New England's shores seeking to found a society at once holy and well-ordered. For Puritanism the public good was always considered prior to individual goods.

It was this goal of a corporate expression of the godly life that made the Puritan in New England wary of those who allowed their enthusiasm for the spiritual life to carry them into separatism. He was profoundly unwilling to allow the exigencies of the personal spiritual quest to break the bonds of community. Rather, the Puritan sought "a society where the perfection of God would find proper recognition among imperfect men."[1]

There was, of course, more involved in the Puritan enterprise than simply a prudential desire for a reasonable degree of public order. The holy community was a body set apart by God's calling. As the Cambridge Platform had it, "a Congregational Church is by the Institution of Christ a part of the Militant Visible Church, consisting of a company of Saints by calling."[2] Implicit in the notion of the holy community was the doctrine of election. Puritans all agreed that God had drawn a line setting apart the saints from the wicked. The company of saints represented, in rough fashion at least, the elect gathered from the world. Separatists and non-separatists differed on the implications of this conviction and all were agreed that the exact line of

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[1] Ibid., p. 155

[2] "The Cambridge Platform," Smith, Handy, Loetscher, American Christianity, I. 130.

demarcation was not a matter for human discrimination. Yet all were also agreed that some effort at discrimination must be made if the church was to be at all distinguished from the world. At a minimum the saints must exhibit purity of life and a reasonable grasp of the doctrines of the church.

According to Professor Morgan, it is in New England that the most stringent tests were applied toward the goal of establishing the elect society. In the first decade after the founding of the Massachusetts Bay Colony there began the practice of requiring from the candidate for church membership not only a confession of faith but also a profession of his experience of saving grace. As Morgan summarizes this development:

> The English emigrants to New England were the first Puritans to restrict membership in the church to visible saints, to persons, that is, who had felt the stirrings of grace in their souls, and who could demonstrate this fact to the satisfaction of other saints. The early Separatists had demanded the exclusion from the church of the visibly wicked; the later Separatists, and especially Henry Ainsworth, had implied that the exclusion of the wicked meant the inclusion only of saints; and at the same time the nonseparating English Puritan divines had been teaching their readers and listeners how to recognize the movements of grace within the soul and thus to determine whether one was a saint or not. It had remained for the New Englanders to combine and carry these ideas to fruition by constructing their churches entirely of persons who had demonstrated their sainthood to one another.[1]

It was in New England that the idea of an elect society reached its fullest development, short of absolute separatism. New England was founded, as Winthrop sought to make clear to his people, in order to be "a citty upon a hill." It would be the elect society, the church invisible in its visible embodiment.

Puritanism was guided by this faith in the holy commonwealth.

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[1] Visible Saints, (New York: New York University Press, 1963), p. 113.

It provided primary content to the meaning of Divine sovereignty. It is God in his providential order who sets apart the redeemed. The Puritan way was predicated on the notion that an elect society had been called into being and separated from the world. It would be, as John Davenport said, "a city compact within it self."[1] And as he went on to say, this city would walk "by one and the same rule." In the city of the saints there would be no diversity. On these grounds Nathaniel Ward issued his famous advertisement to the effect "that all Familists, Antinomians, Anabaptists, and other Enthusiasts, shall have free liberty to keep away . . . ."[2] God had so ordained it that the world was divided into elect and non-elect. The elect community was of a fixed order, circumscribed and characterized, above all, by unity. "The Scripture saith, there is nothing makes free but Truth, and Truth saith, there is no Truth but One . . . ."[3] It was a late version of Augustine's City of God which guided the Puritan imagination in the New World or, to vary the image, the Puritan would do his part in establishing God's "garden." As Thomas Hooker phrased it, "I knew there is wilde love and joy enough in the world, as there is wilde Thyme and other herbes, but we would have garden love and garden joy, of Gods own planting."[4] It was a vision marked by a desire for permanence, restraint, unity and regularity.

Jonathan Edwards was born nearly three-quarters of a century

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[1] "John Davenport's Creed," American Christianity, I. 213.

[2] "The Simple Cobbler of Aggawam," Ibid., p. 127

[3] Ibid., p. 128

[4] "The Soules Implantation" (London, 1637), cited by Miller and Johnson, The Puritans, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Brothers, 1963), I. 61.

after the establishing of the Puritan commonwealth in New England and much had happened in that time to alter both its form and its spirit. Yet the basic outlines were intact and Edwards applied himself to the problems of the godly life from an early age, an interest prompted and sustained, no doubt, by his father's ministerial office. It is in the "Personal Narrative" that Edwards, in later life, paused to survey his spiritual journey from Windsor to Northampton. The great theme is the sovereignty of God and appropriately the last entry records a Saturday evening in January, 1739, when Edwards found himself much affected with the conviction that "God reigned, and that his will was done."[1] Edwards sketched in the background of his development, describing a struggle which, he relates, had existed "from my childhood up" with the doctrine of divine sovereignty. "My mind had been full of objections against the doctrine of God's sovereignty, in choosing whom he would to eternal life and rejecting whom he pleased; leaving them eternally to perish, and be everlastingly tormented in hell."[2] It is a significant entry, not because Edwards' struggle was decisive, or because it was not. It is significant rather because Edwards accepted so easily. According to his account he found it a "horrible doctrine" but accepted it nonetheless. Many contemporaries of Edwards were undergoing the same struggle and were driven to reject the doctrine altogether. It is characteristic of Edwards that he apparently never entertained this possibility.

But this was not the end of it. During his college years he experienced "quite another kind of sense of God's sovereignty." It came to him to be not merely a conviction but a delightful conviction.

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[1] "Personal Narrative," Works I. 60.

[2] Ibid.

This occasion Edwards relates to a reading of the doxology from I Timothy 1:17: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever, Amen."

> As I read the words, there came into my soul, and was as it were diffused through it, a sense of the glory of the Divine Being; a new sense, quite different from any thing I ever experienced before . . . . I thought with myself, how excellent a Being that was, and how happy I should be, if I might enjoy that God, and be rapt up to him in heaven, and be as it were swallowed up in him for ever![1]

It was for Edwards the equivalent of conversion, his experience of divine grace. "Were it not for free grace," he cried, ". . . I should appear sunk down in my sins below hell itself . . . ."[2] Yet it seemed that the way of salvation had opened to him: "I love to think of coming to Christ, to receive salvation of him, poor in spirit, and quite empty of self . . . and to live by faith in the son of God, a life of humble, unfeigned confidence in him."[3] Divine grace had authenticated itself in his life. As Herbert Schneider has stressed, "He lived out completely in his own soul the whole Puritan philosophy, and became absolutely convinced on the basis of his own experience that the doctrine was sound."[4]

As Edwards makes clear, the central factor in his experience was the "new sense" of divine sovereignty. There are several characteristics of this experience which will be examined presently but at this point it must be noted that for Edwards the experience of sovereignty was inextricably tied to the notion of election. He had struggled with the disturbing idea that God should freely choose whom he would and

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[1]Ibid. [2]Ibid. [3]Ibid., p. 61.

[4]Herbert W. Schneider, The Puritan Mind (Ann Arbor: Ann Arbor Paperbacks, The University of Michigan Press, 1958), p. 117.

reject whom he pleased. Now we are told of "quite another kind of sense of divine sovereignty." This new sense did not, however, change the fundamental content of the doctrine for Edwards. Rather Edwards found in his remarkable experience of divine presence a new confirmation of a fundamental proposition of the Puritan way. "The doctrine of God's absolute sovereignty, and free grace, in shewing mercy to whom he would shew mercy; and man's absolute dependence on the operations of God's holy spirit, have very often appeared to me as sweet and glorious doctrines."[1] At the heart of his experience there lay the conviction that God was an electing God, a God that set apart elect from non-elect.

This experience can probably be placed in the last year or two of Edwards' college career. He then served a church in New York city for a brief period before returning to Yale as tutor. In September, 1726, he resigned that tutorship and accepted the invitation of Northampton to become the candidate for the position of colleague to the aging Solomon Stoddard. For more than two decades he would have responsibility for the holy community.

It was a transition of no small importance, for it brought Edwards and his vision of divine glory into direct relationship with the church-covenant way or what remained of it after half a century of decline. Instead of contemplating the excellency of the society of being it would be his task to bring some measure of beauty to the intractable society of the church. Having been humbled by the recognition of the divine glory in all of creation, he would now be more mindful of the particular and restricted manifestations of grace in church covenant and sacrament. All this was part of his inheritance and Edwards took up his duties without question.

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[1]Personal Narrative," Works I.

CHAPTER III

ABSOLUTE DEPENDENCE

Solomon Stoddard died in February, 1729, and Edwards became sole pastor of the Northampton congregation. Under Stoddard's leadership the church had become the most important in the Connecticut Valley. In 1731 the Boston clergy honored Edwards with an invitation to deliver the Thursday lecture. In July Edwards journeyed to the coastal town armed with a theological brief of major significance, "God Glorified in Man's Dependence." The document developed in an impressive way that conviction which had already left its mark upon Edwards' mind: It is God alone who disposes the destiny of man. Hence no man could glory in his presence. The discourse builds upon a series of repeated assertions regarding the divine initiative. At its heart lay an unyielding insistence upon the dependence of the redeemed "directly, immediately, and entirely" upon God.[1] The text was drawn from Corinthians ("no flesh should glory in his presence") but the supporting text from Romans 11:36 ("For of him, and through him, and in him are all things") becomes the principal scriptural foundation for the address. Edwards understood it to be the measure of man's dependence that in the work of redemption God is all and man is nothing: "he is the cause and original whence all their good comes, therein it is of him; and that he is the medium by which it is obtained and conveyed, therein they have it through him;

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[1] "Sermon: I Corinthians 1:29-31," Works, VII. 151.

and that he is the good itself given and conveyed, therein it is in him."[1] Therefore God is all in all. "It is fit that he who is, and there is none else, should be the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the all and the only, in this work."[2] Sentence after sentence comes the repeated assertion: "It is God . . . ."

From the distance of better than two centuries this theme would seem unexceptional, even commonplace. What else would be expected than the proclamation of the sovereignty of God and his free grace? In fact, "God Glorified in Man's Dependence" lodged basic criticism against the theological conventions of the day. It was a disturbing portent of things to come.

Despite its assertions of "simplicity," Puritan thought was a complex affair. Thus, while it declared its belief in the sovereign Lord who might at any moment reduce creation to chaos, it also sought to embrace within that belief some assurance as to the efficacy of reason. Indeed, to him the sovereignty of God pointed less to the arbitrary nature of the divine than to the assurance of an unshakable divine order of human affairs. Calvin himself had been critical of that "Sorbonnist dogma" which had appeared to so exalt the divine sovereignty that it detached the divine will from reason and law.[3] What the Puritan saw in divine sovereignty was then not holy caprice but providential order. The doctrine of election or predestination seemed to recommend itself, as Haller has suggested, because of the assurance it offered

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[1] Ibid., p. 15. [2] Ibid., p. 16.

[3] Institutes of the Christian Religion, ed. John T. McNeill (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960) I. xxii. 2.

that in the midst of human disorder there was yet a divine order.[1] At the center of this providential order stood the elect community itself.

What is more, the Puritan was often inclined to bring to this notion of providential order a certain complement of theological or philosophical ideas to clarify or illuminate the meaning of his faith. God's will might be veiled in mystery, but God also had his reasons and, rightly understood, they could be brought to the support of the Puritan way. Among the most important of these ideas were those bound up with the covenant scheme.[2] The federal theology had emerged among Dutch and English Puritans as part of the general attempt of Protestants to work out a theology appropriate to their understanding of the spiritual life. The covenant scheme drew upon medieval theories of the social contract and upon experience with commercial compacts, but, above all, it recommended itself because its basic materials could be gleaned from a careful reading of scripture. This line of thought was advanced by Ames, Perkins and Sibbes in England, but it was in the New England colonies that the covenant scheme came into its own. According to the federal theology, the way of God with man could be understood as a way emerging through a series of compacts initiated by God with man. The covenant of works belonged to the Old Testament and its law and had, because of human sin, proved insufficient for man's salvation. God's answer was the covenant of grace, the terms of which were not based on works but upon man's acceptance in faith of God's freely extended grace. This covenant was amplified by the addition of the church and social covenants which,

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[1]Haller, p. 84

[2]Cf. Perry Miller, "The Marrow of Puritan Divinity," Errand into the Wilderness (New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Brothers, 1964). Leonard J. Trinterud, "The Origins of Puritanism," in The Role of Religion in Modern European History, ed. Sidney A. Burrell.

together with the covenant of grace, made up the three-fold covenant. The first covenant provided for the relationship of man and God, the second for the affairs of man as saint and the third for the affairs of man as a social creature. The covenant of grace was established through Christ as a free gift of a sovereign God, yet a gift which man must acknowledge to make it his own. That due acknowledgement was generally understood to mean man's faithful obedience. Stated carefully, the federal scheme safeguarded the divine sovereignty for it was understood that God would not be bound. At the same time, it did make room for a certain mutuality. As Trinterud has it:

> In the covenant theory of the Rhineland and of the English reformers the covenant is a conditional promise on God's part, which has the effect of drawing out of man a responding promise of obedience, thus creating a mutual pact or treaty. The burden of fulfillment rests upon man, for he must first obey in order to bring God's reciprocal obligation into force.[1]

This federal scheme was given bold summation by Francis Higginson in the new world when he declared: "He hath promised covenant-mercies on the condition of covenant-duties."[2]

The federal theology found favor not because it impugned the majesty of God but because it brought a reasonable measure of order into the building of the Holy Commonwealth. On its basis the federal theologians were able to trace a meaningful order in the divine determinations. Moreover, they were able to provide encouragement for the anxious and a franchise for the energetic. By adhering to its terms they were enabled to avoid the pitfalls of fatalism and antinomianism. On its basis John Cotton and Thomas Hooker could defend the churchway

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[1]Trinterud, p. 60.

[2]Cited by Cotton Mather, Magnalia Christi Americana (London, 1702), I. 14.

of New England and John Winthrop could defend his administration to the citizenry of Massachusetts Bay. Above all, it recommended itself because it could be equated with scripture and readily turned to the needs of the preacher. As Trinterud observed, its great appeal lay in that it could so readily and simply give intellectual expression to the Puritan's piety.[1]

A faith which found meaning in the federal theology also sought other ways of sustaining a sense of order in the world. Another approach was made to this problem through the doctrine of means which supplemented the federal scheme. Calvin had provided the general rubric for the argument: "God's providence does not always meet us in its naked form, but God in a sense clothes it with the means employed."[2] In effect, the natural order was endowed with its own properties while the franchise remained with a sovereign God. Natural events move "as though they were obeying a perpetual law."[3] The explication of this viewpoint was absolutely essential if the Puritan vision of sovereign order was not to be split asunder. Indeed, the defense of the independence, or at least relative independence of the secondary causes was to become a rallying point for those who threatened the Puritan stronghold. So Peter Barrow was denounced by William Perkins for holding that, "God the creator and governor of all things is not the destroyer of the order by him appointed, but the preserver. . . . Whereupon we conclude that secondary causes are not enforced by God's purpose and decree, but carried willingly and after their own nature."[4] The desire for the

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[1]Trinterud, p. 64. [2]Institutes, I. xvi. 4.

[3]Institutes, I. xvi. 4.

[4]Cited by H. C. Porter, Reformation and Reaction in Tudor Cambridge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), p. 377.

assurance of an ordered universe called for the defense of natural order; yet excessive admiration for the dependability of that order, like an excessive zeal for the sovereignty of God, would upset the precarious balance and destroy the very stability which was sought. William Ames was willing to admit that the sun and the stars exist for the conservation of the earth after a manner which is their own but not in such fashion that their properties can in any way inhibit the divine initiative. God does not work immediately but rather mediately "because he worketh by the means of subjects and virtues of second causes."[1] In New England Urian Oakes maintained that, "the great God hath the absolute and infallible Determination of the Successes and Events of all the Operations and Undertakings of created Agents and Second Causes, in his own power."[2] Still, under ordinary circumstances, one may reasonably expect that the sun will shine, the fire will burn or the soldier will fight. "Though God is Able to give Being to things in an immediate way, yet it is his pleasure in the course of his Providence to use Means . . . and so give causal virtue and ability to these and those things in order to the producing of such and such Effects."[3] The proviso that God could always work against the means was perhaps less a counsel of terror than a sign of proper proportion. Natural law, like all other things, was subject to a certain limitation. What the federal scheme was to the Puritan as biblical theologian, the doctrine of means was to

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[1] The Marrow of Sacred Divinity, p. 40.

[2] The Sovereign Efficacy of Divine Providence (The Augustan Reprint Society, Los Angeles: University of California, 1955), p. 15.

[3] Ibid., p. 6.

him as "philosophical" theologian. In each case he was enabled both to honor the divine majesty and yet affirm the stability of the ordinary world. This sense of proportion was one of the abiding traits of that variety of Puritanism which made its way to New England.

The doctrine of means was in fact a product of scholastic metaphysics and is simply one more illustration of the extent to which the Puritan mind was a product of that earlier period of Christian thought. With all of their denunciation of medieval scholasticism, the Puritans were products of that "long training of the intellect of Western Europe in the sense of order" which Whitehead has found to be the contribution of medievalism.[1] The training of the Puritan had been largely carried on by means of a modified version of the scholastic curriculum and it was this training which provided the background of seventeenth-century Puritanism in America.[2] The doctrine of means retains the fundamentally hierarchical arrangement of scholastic thought. This is evidenced again in the appeal of Ames to the rational "platforme" of all things which is the very "divine essence."[3] The Puritan wished to affirm as rational a view of the world as was compatible with the doctrine of divine sovereignty. Hence, he could say with Preston that "all the commandments of God are grounded upon cleare reason, if we were able to finde it out."[4] It is this which supplies the clue to the attraction which Ramus held for Puritan minds.

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[1]Alfred North Whitehead, Science and the Modern World, (New York: Mentor Books, 1948), pp. 12-13.

[2]Miller, New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century (Boston: Beacon Press, 1961), hereafter cited as The New England Mind, Vol. I, chapter IV.

[3]The Marrow of Sacred Divinity (London, 1642), p. 24.

[4]John Preston, cited by Miller, "The Marrow of Puritan Divinity," Errand into the Wilderness, p. 65.

For Petrus Ramus (1515-1572) logic had been a practical discipline, opposing the "natural" way of dialectic or disputation to abstract speculation. It appealed to simplicity against complexity.[1] There was to be one system of logic for both science and opinion, a single theory of invention and arrangement for both logic and rhetoric. To rhetoric itself was left only the prudential question of style and delivery. The art of dialectic was then divided into "invention" and "judgment," the former having to do with the discovery of concepts or arguments, the latter with their disposition or arrangement in propositions. The hallmark of the art of dialectic in its work of invention or discovery was the method of dichotomy. Liberated from the burdensome apparatus of categories and predicaments, concepts would be allowed to fall into their natural place and order. Each concept would be subject to a division and then a process of subdivision dictated by "natural" dichotomies.

The simplicity of the scheme was attractive to those whose prime task was the practical one of preparing the groundwork of a Holy Commonwealth. It proved useful in refuting scholastic pretensions and in laying out Puritan doctrinal treatises and sermons. But above all, Ramism provided additional assurance of the rational character of God's universe. The unfolding of the interelated concepts through the art of dialectic was in fact an unfolding of the divine reason. To Ramus this

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[1] Perry Miller has placed much emphasis on the indebtedness of Puritanism to Ramist thought. Cf. The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century (Boston, Beacon Press, 1939), hereafter cited as The New England Mind, I., chapters V, VI, XI and XII. Other discussions of Ramism may be found in Wilbur Samuel Howell, Logic and Rhetoric in England, 1500-1700 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956) and Walter J. Ong, Ramus: Method of Dialogue from Discourse to Reason (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1959).

method appeared "as a sort of long chain of gold . . . in which the links are these degrees thus depending one from another, and all joined so justly together, that nothing could be removed from it, without breaking the order and continuity of the whole."[1] It was the Great Chain of Being all over again.

To the Puritan Ramus brought fresh assurance that the universe was an ordered one. This was the prime consideration. During the early years of Edwards' life Samuel Willard provided a convenient summary of Puritan conviction in this regard:

> We know nothing of God but by putting some Logical Notion upon him. All things are conveyed to us in a logical way . . . or else we should know nothing of them. Hence God, to fit his discovery of himself to our manner of entertaining it, takes the Rational or Logical Arguments upon himself . . . and by such a way we come to something concerning him, who is in himself invisible.[2]

God had taken upon himself the very symmetry and order, the rationality which was needful if we are to know him. Without such reasonable assurance of "logical notions" we are left in darkened disorder. Jonathan Edwards, then, began his life in which that vision of rational order remained alive.[3] And even when he found it necessary to write off the "old logick" when a student at Yale, he did not forget the pleasure which that rational discipline had afforded him as he had seen his jumbled thoughts ranged into order that he might "run them up to their

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[1] Dialectique, p. 122. cited by Howell, p. 161.

[2] Samuel Willard, A Compleat Body of Divinity, p. 44.

[3] Indeed the passion for order seemed to reach its zenith in the tribute of Edwards' father to Richard Edwards. The eulogy included "a list of seventeen mercies attending the manner of his death, separates his dying words into thirty-five items, works out six ways in which he glorified God at his death, and proceeds to supply numbered particulars under each." Winslow, Jonathan Edwards: 1703-1758, p. 30.

general heads."[1]

This desire to achieve a reasonable order, a desire expressed so many ways within Puritan life, was never a purely academic matter. It was in part a product of his training in an academic tradition which had emphasized such values but even more it was a product of the Puritan program itself. Fundamental to that program was the notion of the Holy Commonwealth with its implicit demands for stability and regularity. Within the corporate community of the saints it was necessary to moderate the potentially discordant drives of the spiritual life. The Puritans were aware of the lesson of Paul that within the community it was more important to speak a reasonable word than to utter a thousand inspired but discordant words. Ann Hutchinson was a trial to the first generation of New Englanders because her appeal to the Spirit seemed to threaten the reasonable order of the Holy Commonwealth. As Professor Schneider has said, from the point of view of the problem of founding New England the Hutchinson case "represent(s) rather a struggle between fanatical religion and moral religion, between socially irresponsible and socially effective churches, between visible and invisible Christianity."[2] The quest of a visible, corporate expression of the faith demanded a symmetry of belief, not fanaticism. Schneider continues, "it is dangerous to generalize about this situation, but if we must generalize, it is reasonably accurate to say that most of the clergy and most of the people usually compromised their theological theories in view of practical

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[1]Leon Howard, "The Mind" of Jonathan Edwards: A Reconstructed Text (University of California Publications: English Studies, 28; Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1963). Cited hereafter as "The Mind."

[2]Schneider, p. 64.

exigencies . . . ."[1] The struggle precipitated by Mistress Hutchinson was one between "all those who conceived of religion as essentially a social and moral institution and those who regarded it as an inner experience of supernatural revelation."[2]

The faith in the free grace of a sovereign God and the recognition of the individual experience of that grace in regeneration were subject to the moderating influences of the social order. Faith must be in its proper proportion. This strikes one, however, not so much as a matter of sagacious compromise as a direct implication of the theology of the elect community. The quest for a well-ordered faith arises in conjunction with the Puritan cognizance of a corporate framework of faith. The elect community would be a community exhibiting the virtues of reasonable order. The federal theology and Puritan "rationalism" both tended to serve the practical need of articulating a sense of dependable order in things. This was never better illustrated than in the New England controversy between those who felt that congregational hymns should be spontaneous, guided only by the prompting of the Spirit, and those who preferred "regular singing." The controversy was finally decided in favor of regularity over against the disharmony of "spiritual dinging." The controversy, like the Hutchinson affair, is an interesting example of the tensions within the Puritan mind. The Spirit could not be denied but the desire for a faith in its proper proportion is also present. So Thomas Symmes could enter a plea on the side of "regular singing" on the grounds that, "there is a Reason to be given why each Note in a Tune is placed where it is, and why and where every

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[1] Schneider, p. 64. [2] Ibid., p. 63.

turn of the voice should be made . . . ."[1] Symmes clinches his argument by reminding his readers that "God is a God of Order. In all things God deals with us as Rational Creatures."

Symmes was bringing his rationalistic argument to the needs of the church-covenant society just as Urian Oakes brought the doctrine of means before the people in order to clarify an otherwise perplexing matter in the life of the Holy Commonwealth. The Puritan's "hidden rationalism" served to strengthen and confirm his faith in the holy community. The God who calls men into the community of saints is also a God of order. His providential ordering was also a work of reason. It was not overly difficult for the Puritan to arrive at this conclusion supported, as it was, by a long tradition of Christian platonism reaching back at least to Augustine. The providential order and the rational order of nature were embraced together in the conviction that God was a God of order. In the society of the saints, faith and reason made common cause.

It is here that one may return to the sermon "God Glorified in Man's Dependence" and appreciate the implications of the Boston lecture. Edwards was here challenging major assumptions of the Puritan way. He was calling into question the tacit limitations which had been placed upon the divine sovereignty in the interests of reasonable order. In particular he was calling into question the assumption of the federal scheme that covenant mercies were attendant on covenant obligations and the assumption of the doctrine of means that God worked through an intermediary realm of secondary causes. These matters are never spelled out in so many words. There was a propriety to be observed. But the

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[1] "The Reasonableness of Regular Singing," pp. 10-11, cited by Ola Winslow, Meeting House Hill (New York: Macmillan Co., 1952), p. 16.

implications are unmistakable. Edwards is rebuking New England out of its own dogma. The sovereignty of God and his free grace is being proclaimed against the connivances of covenant theology. "There is an absolute and universal dependence of the redeemed on God. The nature and contrivance of our redemption is such, that the redeemed are in every thing directly, immediately, and entirely dependent on God: They are dependent on him for all, and are dependent on him every way."[1] The case could not have been stated more clearly. God is "under no obligation."[2] The attack goes very near to the heart of the Puritan enterprise with its affirmation of the symmetry and proportion of the godly life. Edwards was undermining one of the principal devices by which that reasonable symmetry had been maintained. The stress upon an absolute dependence unhinged the carefully contrived balance which had in an earlier day sustained the Puritan commonwealth. He does give passing acknowledgement to the doctrine of means but the emphasis upon absolute and immediate dependence, in effect, overrides that doctrine. In short, Edwards is invoking the uncovenanted, unobliged God who was later to appear in more sinister form in the Great Awakening. The sermon caused a stir and rightly so, for it touched the vital nerve of Puritan faith.

Yet in delivering his stunning blow at the connivances of conventional Puritan theology, Edwards was not abandoning the fundamental faith of his fathers. He had in fact taken up the cause of the Holy Commonwealth and was intent upon reminding his audience of its basic terms, terms which had been obscured by compromises. It is God who undertakes

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[1]Sermon: I Corinthians 1:29-31, Works VII. 159.

[2]Ibid.

the work of redemption. It is God upon whom man is dependent. But in shifting the theological accent from man to God Edwards is by no means surrendering the affirmation of order which had been so basic to the city of the saints. Nor, in rejecting the devices by which Puritanism had encouraged a certain proportion and stability among the saints, was he rejecting the vision of the elect community in its regularity, unity and order. Edwards was no Roger Williams, despairing of the elect community and embracing disorder as the most favorable condition for the work of the Spirit. He retained the ideal of the limited, circumscribed society of the elect and spent his two decades in Northampton in an attempt to breathe life into the Holy Commonwealth. For a time he even dared imagine that Northampton was becoming that "city upon a hill." His God no less than that of earlier Puritans was the God of order. In asserting the absolute sovereignty of God Edwards was not at all suggesting that the sense of order which had so carefully been nurtured within the Puritan mind be abandoned. Instead, he had apprehended a divine order far more imperative than that imagined by the Puritan fathers.

CHAPTER IV

THE NEW WORLD OF PHILOSOPHY

To understand Edwards' new version of the old Puritan God of order it is necessary to go behind the Northampton period and the sermon "God Glorified . . ." to look at those earlier years in which Edwards encountered what he knew to be the "New World of Philosophy."[1] For if Edwards came to Northampton equipped with a remarkably vivid experience of the sovereign God, he came also with a backlog of thinking regarding that sovereignty which reveals the distinct mark of the new philosophy. Edwards' exposure to the new philosophy came at an early age and the influence of those early studies would be discernible to the end of his career. While New England was separated both by distance and by character from England and the continent, yet withal, the currents of the new thought made their way to the New World. Cartesian logic came to Harvard in the 1670s and copies of the Transactions of the Royal Society were circulating in the colonies as early as 1682.[2] The Royal Society, which had been founded in 1662, elected John Winthrop, Jr. as a member in the following year. Even the Connecticut Valley was not exempt from these currents, for the Reverend Timothy Edwards of Windsor took the trouble in 1715 to include in his correspondence the notes of his son's careful and thoroughly pious observations of the flying spider. The

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[1] Works I. 704.

[2] Miller, New England Mind, I. 221.

Windsor essays reveal the stamp of modernity and awareness of the work of Newton. By the time of his college career at Yale Jonathan Edwards was quite convinced that "antiquated Ptolemy" was a thing of the past.[1] In his diary, normally the resting place of pious meditations, Edwards entered a resolution which savored more of new philosophy than of old piety: "If ever I live to years, that I will be impartial to hear the reasons of all pretended discoveries, and receive them if rational, how long soever I have been used to another way of thinking."[2] It was in such discoveries that Edwards found a new understanding of the God of order.

In these early years of intellectual development the influence of Sir Isaac Newton must be reckoned as of no small importance. Edwards had been exposed to Newton in some form while he was still at Windsor[3] and that early interest yielded certain basic notions or formulations which he carried with him for the rest of his life.[4] This is not to say that Newton's work was fully understood or that Edwards had the

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[1] Works, I. 704.

[2] Ibid., p. 94.

[3] The essay "Of the Rainbow," generally regarded as predating the Yale period, presupposes familiarity with Newton. This influence may have come at second hand although Newton first published his "New Theory About Light and Colours" in the Transactions of the Royal Society, No. 80, February 19, 1672 and copies of the Transactions had made their way to New England by at least the 1680s. When Edwards reached Yale both the Opticks and the Principia were available in the Dummer collection. Both volumes are noted in the Edwards "Catalogue."

[4] The influence of the Opticks has recently been attested by Wallace E. Anderson: "There is no single scientific text which Edwards more thoroughly appropriated or persistently incorporated into his own image of nature . . . ." "Immaterialism in Jonathan Edwards' Early Philosophical Notes," Journal of the History of Ideas, XXV, No. 2 (April-June, 1964), p. 182.

makings of a future scientist. His mathematical equipment was too meager to allow a full grasp of the mathematical physics and, in any case, his theological concern was too great. It is to say that certain basic ideas or images, traceable to the new science, embedded themselves in Edwards' mind and that they were operative with some consistency throughout his life. "The very thing I now want, to give me a clearer and more immediate view of the perfections and glory of God," wrote Edwards in his Diary, "is as clear a knowledge of the manner of God's exerting himself, with respect to Spirits and Minds, as I have, of his operations concerning Matter and Bodies."[1]

On the score of "Matter and Bodies" one of the most important notions appropriated was that of a universe of atoms or particular events, mutually interacting and dependent upon a common principle or law. In his precocious study of the flying spider Edwards had already undertaken the examination of that insect within the context of events, the prevailing winds, the altitude, the cycle of birth and extinction, which conspired to determine its behavior. In the college notes he went on to explore the profound interrelatedness of all things as it was illuminated by the law of attraction. With all things operating according to the quantity of their matter and the square of their distance, it seemed evident, to Edwards, that "the Least Atom has an influence on the motion, rest and direction of every body in the Universe."[2] In this great concourse of being it seemed that the smallest happenstance might subvert the very order of things. The first lesson of the universe of the new philosophy, as Edwards understood it, was like that of the

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[1] Works, I. 105.

[2] "Natural Science," Works, I. 722.

Puritan commonwealth: all things must cohere if order is to prevail. In this universe of order nothing could go its way alone, or even cease to be, without radical consequences for the whole, "for Perhaps there is not one leaf of a tree nor Spire of Grass but has effects All over the universe and will have to the End of Eternity . . . ."[1] This was a definitive paradigm for Edwards and it was not forgotten. Many years later he hounded down Arminianism by arguing from "the laws of motion and gravitation laid down by Sir Isaac Newton" that in this coherent world there must be a reason for every eventuality for "the smallest assignable difference between the things which God has made, may be attended, in the whole series of events. . . ."[2] In discovering that the "smallest assignable difference" made all the difference, Edwards found reinforcement for the old truth that unity must prevail. It was a new version of the Puritan adherence to the "publique good."

Beyond this the law of attraction pointed not only to the mutual interrelatedness of all things, but to the very nature of being. To search out the reason in things is "only to find out the proportion of God's acting."[3] What is it, he asks, that defines the world of objects with which we are familiar? What is common to that diverse world of so many things? It is, at first glance, solidity, the occurrence of material objects in space, but what is this but the perseverance of objects against annihilation? The solidity of any body, then, is a direct evidence of its perpetuation in spite of a threatened annihilation and hence a direct manifestation of being in a determinate locus since

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[1] "Of Being," from the text of Leon Howard, The Mind . . . p. 143. Cited hereafter as "Of Being."

[2] Freedom of the Will, p. 392.

[3] "The Mind," #34, p. 92.

"being" and "persevering to be" are identical.[1] If solidity is the essence of any body, we are directed at once to a consideration of being itself. And here Edwards sets aside any consideration of the question of secondary causes. Being or resistance to annihilation is nothing but the divine power "causing resistance in such parts of space as God saw fit."[2] Our encounter with the world of things takes us directly to the divine power itself: "So that the substance of bodies at last becomes either nothing, or nothing but the Deity, acting in that particular manner, in those parts of space where he thinks fit; so that, speaking most strictly, there is no proper substance but God himself."[3] It was again the law of gravitation which provided unusual confirmation. Newton had sought to avoid committing himself on the issue of action at a distance; however, Edwards held no such scruples. Gravity is inherent, the "very being" of the universe.[4] Solidity, indeed, is gravity and on the basis of this conclusion a radical reduction in the economy of being was made possible,

> because it may be proved that Solidity and Gravity are in a good sense the same, and resolvable into each other, and because Solidity has been proved to be the very being of a body; therefore, we may infallibly conclude, that the very being, and the manner of being, and the whole, of bodies depends immediately on the Divine Being . . . . if Gravity should be withdrawn, the whole Universe would in a moment vanish into nothing; so that not only the well-being of the world depends on it, but the very being.[5]

Everything is immediately dependent upon the arbitrary power of being without which the universe would vanish into nothing. The universe of empirical events has thus been reduced to a single uniform principle

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[1] "Natural Science," Works, I. 711.

[2] Ibid., p. 713. [3] Ibid. [4] Ibid., p. 724. [5] Ibid.

which accounts equally for the terrestrial apple and the celestial star not only in their behavior but in their very existence as well. On the one hand, Edwards could reply to the mechanists who endeavored to reduce everything to matter in motion by arguing that there was indeed no independent matter or inherent substantiality but only the divine and arbitrary substance,[1] on the other, he was able to affirm the existence of a uniform law operative through the whole of things.

The revolutionary element in this picture is the principle of uniformity. In most radical fashion the universe has been established upon a common platform of activity where every event is equally dependent upon the direct sustaining power which is being itself. In so doing he has placed his theology in line with one of the most potent of ideas of the new philosophy. From Copernicus onward it had become increasingly evident that the universe not only was penetrated by a rational order but that this order, explicable in terms of mathematical constructions, applied to the universe as an undifferentiated whole. The pendulum upon earth and the star in its orbit were not fundamentally diverse. A common rationality was exhibited in the falling stone or the winging bird. In consequence, the old picture of the ladder of being which had for centuries served to relate the One and the many had now to be drastically revised. The former pattern in which unity was understood to embrace a diversity of degrees was gradually reconstructed according to the rather different proposition of uniformity.

Edwards was offering a confident answer to the problem which began to emerge more clearly as the work of the new science advanced.

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[1]Edwards wrote, "contrary to the opinion of Hobbes (that nothing is substance but matter) that no matter is Substance, But only God Who Is A Spirit . . . ." Miscellanies, "f."

If the world was to be understood as governed by immutable, intelligible law, what would be the relationship of God to this world? What could be made of the old theological distinction between nature and grace? The problem becomes evident in the famous exchange of letters between Leibniz and Samuel Clarke. In regard to the question of God's role in the cosmos, Leibniz had maintained, "that when God works miracles, he does not do it in order to supply the wants of nature, but those of Grace."[1] Since God is perfect the law of nature cannot be insufficient. The Newtonian position, defended by Clarke, which posited God as the rectifier of natural motion, seemed to Leibniz to turn God into a rather incompetent mechanic incapable of constructing a perfect universe.[2] God's all-sufficiency was most appropriately expressed in the perfection of the universe. But Clarke, in turn, objected that his opponent's notion of a divinely pre-established harmony, in effect, exiled God from the government of the world.[3] It was a struggle to determine what meaning divine grace could have in the new universe of uniform, immutable law. In the end the distance between the two positions is less than it would seem, for Clarke, as much as Leibniz, is dedicated to the principle of uniformity. In a passage from The Being and Attributes of God Clarke set forth the standard of invariable rationality as it applied to God.

> For this is a Necessity, not of Nature and Fate, but of Fitness and Wisdom; a Necessity, consistent with the Greatest Freedom and most perfect choice. For the only Foundation of this Necessity, is such unalterable Rectitude of Will, and Perfection of wisdom,

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[1] The Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence, ed. with introduction and notes by H. G. Alexander (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), p. 12.

[2] Ibid., p. 20.

[3] Ibid., p. 51.

> as makes it impossible for a Wise Being to resolve to Act foolishly; or for a Nature infinitely Good, to choose to do that which is Evil.[1]

In this new universe it was necessary for God to be perfect even as the laws of mathematical physics were perfect.

In later years Edwards indicated his agreement with this passage of Clarke.[2] Nor was he greatly disturbed by the problem of grace in a system of "unalterable Rectitude." Calvin had declared that if "God's governance is so extended to all his works it is a childish cavil to enclose it within the stream of nature."[3] Edwards had learned that "God's governance" and the "stream of nature" were but one and the same thing. The law of attraction is the "proportion" of divine action; God is _esse entium_, very being of every event. In more radical fashion than Calvin could have imagined, the law of nature had become the measure of grace. By severing his connections with the philosophy of secondary causes, Edwards could, at a single stroke, both accept the new world of philosophy and adhere to the sovereign God upon whom man is dependent.

From Newton Edwards gained an assurance regarding the uniform and invariable principles at work in the universe. He turned to Locke, the second major figure representing the new world of philosophy, to consider the problem of the relationship of that universe to man. Together Newton and Locke were the two primary influences upon the college notes. Locke had become in every way the philosopher of the age. He embraced in remarkable fashion so many of the salient new convictions emerging in the experience of the seventeenth-century. Standing at

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[1] _Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God_ (6th ed., London, 1725), p. 64.

[2] Cited by Edwards, _Freedom of the Will_, p. 377.

[3] _Institutes_, I. xvi. 3.

once on the growing edge of a new political philosophy and at the forefront of philosophical empiricism, his task, in broadest terms, was that of preparing a new model of man fit for the new age. The appropriateness of his achievement may be measured by the ready acceptance which it received. In effect, Locke had to work out a *via media* between the claims of materialism and those, such as the Cambridge Platonists, who had protested against materialism in the name of reason. "For the seventeenth and much of the eighteenth century," as John Yelten has said, "Locke was the end-product and the polished formulator of this dual tradition of materialism and immaterialism."[1] His strategy was two-fold: to divest reason of its pretensions and yet to validate the intellectual process in its proper functions. To bring reason into line with the principles of the new world, it was necessary to eliminate the Platonic conception of an intelligible reality apprehended by the mind alone. There are no transcendental or innate ideas to which the mind has privileged access, no unearned insights apart from the labor of experience and reflection. The basic materials of reason are the simple ideas, the atoms of experience, which make their way to the bare closet of the mind. "It seems probably to me," wrote Locke, "that the simple ideas we receive from sensation and reflection are the boundaries of our thoughts, beyond which the mind, whatever efforts it would make, is not able to advance one jot . . . ."[2] These simple ideas enter the mind through the channels of sensation, the narrow windows through which

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[1] "Locke and the Seventeenth Century Logic of Ideas," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XVI (October, 1955), 452.

[2] John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, collated and annotated by Alexander Campbell Fraser (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1959), II. xxiii. 29.

light penetrates to the "dark room" of the understanding.[1] Once in the mind, the simple ideas may be combined into complex ideas in order to deal with more complicated objects such as beauty or communities of men. But the basic building blocks of understanding remain the simple ideas. Contemplating or reflecting upon these ideas the understanding arrives at knowledge, that is, "the perception of the connexion of and agreement or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas."[2] Locke, like the cambridge men, speaks of the venerable "candle of the Lord" but it is by no means the same candle. For the Cambridge Platonists it was an expression of a transcendental principle linking man to the divine; for Locke it was merely that which enabled man in the dark room of his understanding to sort out the ideas that had come to him through sense experience.

Locke's mind was hardly an apparatus meant for ecstasy. He was repelled by that insatiable thirst for infinity to which spirits such as Thomas Traherne aspired and he suspected the warm and lively knowledge suggested by the Cambridge men. It is a vain thing to "loose our thoughts into the vast ocean of Being; as if all that boundless extent were the natural and undoubted possession of our understandings, wherein there was nothing exempt from its decision, or that escaped its comprehension."[3] Yet, withal, Locke's model was still recognizably a human mind at work and not Hobbes's organ of reaction and response. It was quite possible to discern the individual quality of perception and the distinctive, if

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[1] Ibid., II. xi. 17.

[2] Ibid., Iv. 1. 1-2

[3] Ibid., Introduction. 7, p. 31.

limited, activity of the understanding. Locke's success lay in the careful balance which he maintained at just this point.

The encounter of Edwards with Locke is evident in the series of considerations gathered together under the heading of "The Mind." What is remarkable, in the light of Edwards' famous espousal of Locke, is the manner in which Locke is handled. Edwards avers, in contradiction to Locke, that "knowledge is not the perception of the agreement, or disagreement, of ideas, but rather the perception of the union, or disunion, of ideas--or the perceiving whether two or more ideas belong to one another."[1] Edwards seems to be suggesting that union, belonging to one another, is something more than mere agreement. There must be something real which is the foundation of an agreement apprehended. When the problem of personal identity comes into view a similar objection is placed against Locke's contention that such identity lies "not in identity of substance, but . . . in the identity of consciousness."[2] Edwards comes to the conclusion that this solution is satisfactory only if it specified that the principle which sustains identity is that of divine consciousness.[3] Again it is an attempt to provide a foundation in nature and beyond the mind: "So when we say, A person has these and those things, laid up in his memory, we mean, they would actually be repeated in his mind, upon some certain occasions, according to the Law

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[1] "The Mind," #71, p. 26. In the commentary to his reconstructed text, Leon Howard provides a suggestive interpretation of Edwards' critical attitude toward Locke and the possible Cartesian influence of the Port Royal logic.

[2] Locke, II. xxvii. 19.

[3] "The Mind," #11, p. 52.

of Nature; . . . ."[1] Edwards is struggling with the atomism, the fragmentation of reality and experience implicit in the viewpoint of Locke. If the world is to remain rational there must be a real foundation for thought. In his frequent consideration of the problem of abstract ideas Edwards again endeavors to go beyond Locke's theory of a gradual process of abstraction. There is, Edwards thinks, "a great foundation in Nature for those abstract ideas, which we call Universals . . . ."[2] "All Universals, therefore, cannot be made up of ideas, abstracted from Particulars . . . ."[3] The union of one idea with another is by no means simply an arbitrary grouping of particular ideas under a common name but "such an union of them, that the consideration of one shall naturally excite the idea of others."[4] If a stranger were to come to earth and meet a human being and then chance to encounter other human beings, "there would be a Genus, or Universal Idea, [of man] formed in his mind, naturally, without his counsel or design."[5] Again Edwards is appealing to the divine constitution: "God has not only distributed things into species, by evidently manifesting, by his making such an agreement in things, that he designed such and such particulars to be together in the mind; but by making the Soul of such a nature, that those particulars, which he thus made to agree, are unavoidably together in the mind, one naturally exciting and including the others."[6] Here Locke is being reconciled with Edwards' metaphysical vision wherein no particular atom, or for that matter no particular idea, may go its way alone. Out of the traditional view of an ordered community of being, as buttressed by the

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[1] Ibid., #69, p. 59. [2] Ibid., #41, p. 67. [3] Ibid., #42, p. 69.
[4] Ibid., #43, p. 69. [5] Ibid. #43, pp. 69-70.
[6] Ibid., #42, p. 70. Cf. #47, p. 86.

reading of Newton and Locke, Edwards constructed the idealism of his college notes.

The drift of this system of "ideas" can be seen in the discussion which occurs under the heading of "Substance." "It is now agreed upon by every knowing philosopher, that Colours are not really in the things, no more than Pain is in a needle; but strictly no where else but in the mind."[1] Pressing a reductive argument which parallels that of the consideration of solidity, Edwards declares that if color cannot have its locus outside of the mind then nothing can transcend the mind except sheer "resistance" and this is nothing else but the actual exertion of the divine power.[2] Support for this reduction may have been found in Locke's contention that the observed constancy in the ordinary course of events does not mean that we have knowledge of the connection between the sequence of events.[3] Ultimately, Locke suggests, this connection can be attributed to nothing other than the arbitrary determination of that "All-Wise Agent" who makes events behave as they do.[4] Edwards was prepared to carry on his reductio ad deum in even more rigorous fashion. Locke's substance, the "something we know not what" is dispensed with. Substance is nothing other than "resistance" and that only the exertion of power by a constant law which is the divine establishment. This brings Edwards to a confident conclusion: "The world is therefore an

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[1] Ibid., #27, pp. 62-63.

[2] Ibid., p. 63.

[3] "For if I saw such a collection of simple ideas as is wont to be called man, existing together one minute since, and am now alone, I cannot be certain that the same man exists now, since there is no necessary connexion of his existence a minute since with his existence now . . . ." Locke, IV. xi. 9.

[4] Ibid., IV. iii. 28.

ideal one; and the Law of creating, and the succession, of these ideas is constant and regular."[1]

The "idealism" involved in these considerations is of a particular sort. He is not opposing ideas which are internal to an external world which is less knowable. He is especially eager to avoid implying that the material universe exists only in the mind. It is not acceptable to maintain that "all the world is contained in the narrow compass of a few inches of space, in little ideas in the place of the brain."[2] This would be little better than to recognize an autonomous matter. "It is not proper at all . . . to say that bodies do not exist without the mind. For the scheme will not allow the mind to be supposed determined to any place, in such a manner as to make that proper; for Place itself is mental . . . ."[3] Edwards' idealism is based on religious considerations. It is his way of asserting the divine sovereignty. All things exist by virtue of that power which is excercised by regular law, the mind no less than that which the mind apprehends. It is the "Determination of God, that such and such ideas shall be raised in created minds, upon such conditions."[4] Here "within" and "without" should not be understood as radically differing determinations. Edwards is not opposing inner to outer for both are "merely mental conceptions."[5] What is decisive is the divine constitution by which the ideas are displayed in a constant and lawful manner.

> We would not therefore be understood to deny, that things are where they seem to be. For the principles we lay down, if they are narrowly looked into, do not infer [sic] that. Nor will it be found, that they at all make void Natural Philosophy, or the science

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[1] "The Mind," #27, p. 64. [2] Ibid., #34, p. 91.

[3] Ibid., #51, pp. 88-89. [4] Ibid., #36, p. 94.

[5] Ibid., #51, p. 89.

> of the Causes or Reasons of corporeal changes; For to find out the reasons of things, in Natural Philosophy, is only to find out the proportion of God's acting. And the case is the same, as to such proportions, whether we suppose the World, only mental, in our sense, or no.[1]

The ideas, then, are not Platonic archetypes but rather events or atoms of experience occurring according to a constant law. Ideas are discreet events which are constituents of a whole. In their sequence of "cause" and "effect" they are manifestations of that divine constitution which is "the proportion of God's acting." "There is his determination, his care, and his design, that Ideas shall be united forever, just so, and in such a manner, as is agreeable to such a series."[2] Within this framework of interpretation, Edwards has no difficulty in dealing with the vexed question of the existence of those things which are not at a given moment in some conscious mind. Edwards gives a crisp reply: "There has been in time past such a course and succession of existences, that these things must be supposed to make the series complete, according to the Divine appointment, of the order of things."[3] The furniture in the closed room is there for otherwise the world would be "out of joint."

Here we are led back to a familiar set of assumptions; they are in fact associated with the law of attraction, taken up in the notes on natural philosophy. The furniture, and with it the whole consequent train of ideas, remains constant for the least difference would have its effect upon the whole.

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[1] Ibid., #34, p. 92.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., #40, p. 96.

> Yea, the whole Universe would be otherwise; such an influence have these things, by their attraction and otherwise. Yea, there must be an universal attraction, in the whole system of things, from the beginning of the world to the end; and to speak more strictly and metaphysically, we must say, in the whole system and series of ideas in all Created minds; so that these things must necessarily be put in, to make complete the system of the ideal world.[1]

Edwards illustrates his case by arguing that a "leaden Globe, of a mile in diameter" moving in an infinite void will have its motion retarded by the presence of the least atom in that void. He concludes: "The existence and motion of every atom, has influence, more or less, on the motion of all other bodies in the Universe, great or small, as is most demonstrable from the Laws of Gravity and Motion."[2] The ideas which are divine determinations behave, in fact, like the atoms of Newton's physics governed by the universal law of attraction.

> If a ball of lead were supposed to be let fall from the clouds, and no eye saw it, 'till it get within ten rods of the ground, and then its motion and celerity was perfectly discerned in its exact proportions; if it were not for the imperfection and slowness of our minds, the perfect idea of the rest of the motion would immediately, and of itself arise in the mind, as well as that which is there. So, were our thoughts comprehensive and perfect enough, our view of the present state of the world, would excite in us a perfect idea of all past changes.[3]

In this passage we have something of Newton and something of Locke blended into a Cartesian rationalism. For Edwards this universe of regular law was above all intelligible. The world of fixed and universal law is the intelligible universe in which "ideas" constitute a system and truth is established by the consistency of our ideas with that sequence of ideas raised "according to God's stated law and order."[4]

The significance of Edwards' "perceptualism" does not lie in the supposed reduction of the external world to internal ideas. For Edwards

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[1] Ibid., p. 97.

[2] Ibid., #40, p. 99.

[3] Ibid., #34, p. 93.

[3] Ibid., #10, p. 51.

the philosophy of perception did not so much reduce the external world to perceptions as it bound men through the act of perception to that universal system of existence of which man was a part. The stable system of ideas "communicated ot us, and to other minds, according to certain fixed and exact established Methods and Laws,"[1] was a system of events, occasions of "resistance," given to perception as well as in it. The mind is furnished from without. The ideas are simple, that is, they are not "thoughts" but images. What is apprehended is true if it is rightly seen. This thesis is neither solipsism nor Pyrrhonism but a variety of realism. The act of perception, no less than the blade of grass, is part of a total sequence of events and if man's vision were comprehensive enough he would conceive the whole sequence. Here Edwards differs from Berkeley, to whom he has on occasion been compared.[2] Berkeley's perceptualism was an affirmation of concrete experience over against all abstraction and a protest against the determinism of Newtonian philosophy. Edwards, too, was aware of the claims of concrete experience, but he founded that experience in "nature," which was to say, in the exact and stable operation of God. In this enterprise he was not greatly disturbed by abstract ideas and even defended them in the interests of the rational universe he envisioned. He was less disturbed by abstraction than desirous of intelligibility. As Professor Schneider has noted, the idealism of Berkeley was erected in direct

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[1] "The Mind," #13, p. 54.

[2] While there has been discussion of the possible influence of Berkeley upon Edwards, the great majority of students have not found evidence to support this viewpoint. Edwards' notes were written, in all probability, before the work of Berkeley had reached New England. Smyth, Miller, Schneider and Elwood all agree in this finding. For a summary cf. Douglas Elwood, The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards, n. 51, p. 169-170.

opposition to that of Edwards. "Edwards' was monistic and deterministic; Berkeley's was pluralistic and 'Arminian.' This pluralistic idealism served two purposes: it gave a new philosophic basis for human freedom, thus undermining the Puritan idealism of Edwards; and it made a bold attack on the new determinism of Newtonian science."[1]

Berkeley had been distressed by determinism but Edwards had found it possible, to his way of thinking, to reconcile Newtonian determinism with his conception of divine sovereignty. In following Newton, however, Edwards did not take the path of the Deists who, like Berkeley, had a low opinion of Calvinism. The Deists made God the "author" of natural law, a supernatural maker who constructed the marvelous system of the universe and sent it on its way. Theyrecognized the uniformity of natural laws but were more impressed by the uniformity than by the factor of determinism. God was above nature and, except for an occasional intervention on the part of the supreme being, nature was largely independent. Edwards could not, of course, abide the notion of an independent creation. He went beyond them by refusing to allow God to be elevated above natural law. His refusal took the form of an extension of Puritan rationalism into the new world of philosophy. By identifying the new science with a "stable system of ideas communicated to human minds according to fixed laws"and by further identifying this rational order with the providential order of the sovereign God, Edwards endeavored to unite the God of Puritan faith with the "late improvements in philosophy." In a manner which was unique (and perhaps not a little demonic) Jonathan Edwards took the providential order of God, the rational order and the natural order and declared them to be one.

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[1]Schneider, p. 179-180.

CHAPTER V

EXCELLENCY

Edwards emerged from his encounter with the new world of philosophy with three fundamental convictions. In the first place he had discovered the immediacy of the divine activity and found a rationale for it in Newton's law of attraction. In terms of this viewpoint God was the immediate source of every event. Hence, "the constant exertion of the infinite power of God is necessary to preserve bodies in being."[1] The established constitution of nature is nothing else than the divine itself. The belief that God worked without intermediary was not at all foreign to Puritan piety, but Edwards brought to this faith a rigor that was a result of his investigations in the new philosophy. Because of this he found it necessary to call into question certain aspects of Puritan federal theology which obscured the apprehension of the immediacy of divine activity.

In the second place, Edwards had been impressed by the intelligibility of this new universe. This meant to him that the universe was a rational or ideal system. The new philosophy served Edwards, as Ramist logic had served earlier Puritans, as a source of "logical notions" which, as Willard claimed, must be discovered before God can be known. Edwards shared that _esprit de système_ which Professor Randall has found to be exhibited in so many figures after Descartes:

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[1] Natural Science," _Works_, I. 713.

> They were not critics of their institutions, but only of the inherited reasons for supporting them; they did not bring reason to bear against existing irrationalities, but sought a rational system that would persuade men to accept them. They did not try to build and construct a more rational social order, they found a rational order in what they possessed.[1]

With the help of Newton and Locke, Edwards could affirm what Puritans had always believed, viz., that the providential order of God is also a reasonable order. There must be a reason why each note in the great harmony of existence is placed where it is. Having come this far, it was virtually impossible to avoid the definition of beauty in terms of this universe of order.

The third key concept which emerges in Edwards' college notes is that of "excellency." The universe was the arena in which God exerted himself in constant and regular fashion, in such fashion that one is led to discern a universal system of existence. But beyond this the universe was a communication of divine excellency or beauty. The West had long tended to associate reason with beauty. It was part of that marriage which had been consummated between neo-platonism and Christianity by Augustine of Hippo. Augustine had been convinced that "God loves order" and that God's order was to be discovered in the fixed ratios of geometry and music and elsewhere throughout creation. Puritans had been nurtured by this belief. For the Puritan, beauty meant the right disposition of the parts and this held a significance which was at once social and metaphysical. As in Hooker's image of "God's garden," it helped to hold up before men an ideal of human order. It pointed also to a constancy and rationality in the very constitution of things. The loveliness of Judge Sewall's apostrophe on Plum Island is derived less from an appreciation

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[1] Randall, pp. 399-400.

of the Sturgeon in the Merrimack or the coming of the Sea-Fowl than from the sense of constancy and permanence which moves beneath the series of images. In much the same manner John Cotton's biographer has called attention to the sense of symmetry which governed the life of this first generation Puritan. There was a "graceful balance of his inner with his outer estate" so that, finally, "he viewed his becoming as a being and his progress through life as the attainment of equipose."[1] The new science did not at once disturb this sense of order so rich in meanings both cosmic and personal. Rather, the evidence of intelligible law put forward by Newton provided new confirmation. As Professor Nicolson has observed:

> The Principia offered climactic proof that order, proportion, regularity were universal principles, comprising the harmony of the universe. . . . From another point of view Newton's Opticks offered a new evidence for Beauty . . . . Indeed the apparently indisputable proof drawn from Newton's laws, that Beauty consisted in limitation and proportion was in part responsible for the fact that theories of Beauty remained as static as they did . . . .[2]

Edwards would be no exception for he too found in this new world of philosophy evidences of beauty. In a universe characterized by such an eminent intelligibility, beauty seemed to be inherent in the very structure of things. To Edwards this fact was attested not only in the larger frame of the universe but in the most trivial of activities as well: "So we may catch ourselves at observing the rule of harmony and regularity, and when playing with our hands, or walking about the room."[3] It seemed of prime importance to come to an understanding of this beauty for it was

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[1] Larzer Ziff, The Career of John Cotton (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 256.

[2] Marjorie Hope Nicolson, From Mountain Gloom to Mountain Glory (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1959), p. 272.

[3] "The Mind," #1, p. 45.

a key to the order of things. It was also a test of his conviction that matters of the spirit could be made as clear and distinct as those concerning "Matter and Bodies." His initial entry on the topic of "Excellency" in the notes on "The Mind" was accompanied by diagrams not unlike those in the "Notes on Science."

Edwards begins by separating excellence into either simple or complex forms of relatedness. The former is illustrated in arrangements of simple likeness or equality such as symmetry or equidistance.[1] All excellence, we are told, may be reduced to such equalities or identities. The formula is concise: "so much equality, so much beauty."[2] Complex beauty, on the other hand, involves proportionality rather than simple equality. In this case the relationships are multi-termed and the recognition of beauty only occurs when the pattern of terms is seen within a larger configuration. Those things which appear to be disorderly from a narrow perspective may, when "taken with the whole," reveal themselves to be a part of a fitting and proportioned relationship.[3] It would seem that greater value is attached to such complex beauty. The natural loveliness of vines, plants and trees "consists of a very complicated harmony" and "spiritual harmonies" are of yet vaster extent "and require a vastly larger view to comprehend them."[4] Excellency comes, then, to lie, not in a perfect unity devoid of diversity, but in the "larger view" whereby there is oneness through agreement among the many. "Indeed what we call <u>One</u>, may be excellent because of a consent of parts, or some consent of those in that being, that are distinguished into a plurality

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[1] "The Mind," #1, pp. 39ff. [2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 43.

[3] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 44. [4] <u>Ibid</u>.

some way or other. But in a being that is absolutely without any plurality, there cannot be Excellency, for there can be no such thing as consent or agreement."[1] Nor can beauty be found in that harmony which is merely private or limited:

> That which is beautiful, considered by itself separately, and deformed, considered as a part of something else more extended; or beautiful, only with respect to itself and a few other things, and not as a part of that which contains all things--the Universe--is false beauty and a confined beauty. That which is beautiful, with respect to the universality of things, has a generally extended excellence and a true beauty; and the more extended, or limited, its system is, the more confined or extended is its beauty.[2]

Beauty is thus finally taken to be an agreement of relationship rather than simply a determination of equality. The term to which Edwards finally adheres is that of "consent" and his "universal definition of Excellency" becomes "the consent of Being to Being . . . ."[3]

Edwards was, of course, not simply propounding an aesthetic. Beauty possessed a meaning that was both metaphysical and social. He was convinced that in beauty he discerned his God. At this point Edwards was thoroughly Augustinian. All beauty seemed to him to be but a shadow of the divine excellence. "The beauty of the world is a communication of God's beauty."[4] Ours is a world of images and shadows. "As bodies are shadows of being, so their proportions are shadows of proportion."[5] Edwards was to be one of the last of the theological practitioners of analogical thinking.

The imagery has a dual purpose. On the one hand, it suggests the insubstantiality of the world, on the other, it may also suggest the

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[1] Ibid., p. 46.

[2] Ibid. #14, pp. 100-101.

[3] Ibid., #1, p. 45

[4] Miscellanies, 651.

[5] "The Mind," #1, p. 43.

Pauline "invisible" nature that is evident in the "things that are made."[1] The Puritan could play upon either side of this imagery. From the point of view of human sin the world was indeed unstable; yet it was never entirely possible to forget that the world had once been pronounced good. The similes of Thomas Hooker and the emblemizing of Edward Taylor remind us of an attentiveness to the rhythm and movement of the world in which shadows can become positive vehicles of glory. Edwards would also play upon both senses of the term "shadow": "The shadow of a thing is an exceedingly imperfect representation of it, yet has such resemblance, that it has a most evident relation to the thing of which it is the shadow."[2] The world is then a thing of "dark resemblance" governed by that "great analogy" which binds together the animate and inanimate, the corporeal and the spiritual, in the great oneness of being.[3] He noted the pleasure children seemed to take in expressing the relationships between various discoveries and it was to him confirmation of the fact that "the beauty of the world is a communication of God's beauty."[4]

The language of "shadow" and "resemblance" suggests that for all his dedication to the new world of philosophy, Edwards has not parted company with the old hierarchical world view. He even seems to apprehend a scale of being according to the rule, "the more the Consent is, and the more extensive, the greater is the Excellency."[5] As something finds agreements in a greater or a lesser range of the multi-termed relationships of the universe, so it can be said to have a greater or a lesser degree of existence. The greater degree of existence is to be found where the

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[1] Romans 1:20.

[2] "Notes on the Bible," Works IX.

[3] Miscellanies 651.

[4] Ibid., 293.

[5] "The Mind," #1, p. 46.

agreements reach out to the "university of things" with an "extended excellence." "An archangel, must be supposed to have more existence, and to be every way further removed from nonentity, than a worm."[1] The archangel, it must be presumed, participates more fully in the society of being than the lowly worm. Yet despite the occasional references to the angelic order, the hierarchical assumption has undergone a transformation. The order is less vertical than horizontal, less a matter of "degree" than of "extension." The rule of increasing "consent" is less an ascent on the ladder of being than a comprehension of being. As Edwards puts it, "the more extended or limited, its system is, the more confined or extended its beauty."[2] The hierarchical imagery is still operative but its meaning is being changed by the force of the principle of uniformity. Limitation or extension are coming to replace the traditional terms associated with the notion of an hierarchy of being. Thus, God becomes less the apex of the hierarchy than the all-comprehending being whose beauty embraces all things. Beauty is constitutive of being and not merely a reflection of true being. Being "is nothing else but Proportion."[3] For the Puritan, the transcendent God could at any point suspend the beauty of the natural order for some great work. For the youthful Edwards this order, the order of excellence, was the divine being itself: "Being in order is all that we call God . . . ."[4] Edwards could find, on these grounds, that the world governed by Newton's law of attraction and the world governed by a divine excellence were one and the same.

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[1] "The Nature of True Virtue," Works, III. 98.

[2] "The Mind," #14, pp. 100-101.

[3] Miscellanies, 27.

Edwards' investigation of the meaning of beauty has another importance, for it becomes the link between the new world of philosophy and the essential meanings of the Puritan commonwealth. This link becomes evident when Edwards shifts his discussion of beauty from terms such as "equality" and "ratio" to that term so freighted with covenant significance, "consent." Excellence finally reveals itself to be "like a society . . . sweetly agreeing together."[1] The influence of the federal theology seems evident.

> When we spake of Excellence in Bodies, we were obliged to borrow the word, Consent, from Spiritual things; but Excellence in and among Spirits is in its prime and proper sense, Being's consent to Being. There is no other proper consent but that of Minds, even of their Will; which, when it is of Minds toward Minds, it is Love, and when of Minds towards other things, it is Choice. Wherefore all the Primary and Original beauty or excellence, that is among Minds, is Love; and into this may all be resolved that is found among them.[2]

Beginning with diagrams, Edwards ends with a definition of excellence oriented toward the heart and suitable to the life of the Holy Commonwealth. The investigation of excellence was crucial to Edwards because within its terms he could embrace both the new world of philosophy and the old world of faith. In the physical universe he had found that agreement which characterized the relationship of the least blade of grass to the whole concourse of things was paralleled by the consent of the heart to being. The great society of being seemed like a society of love.[3] Hence under the rule of excellence could be encompassed Newton's law of attraction and Winthrop's law of love in the city of the saints. In the rule of beauty Edwards found confirmation of the basic terms of the holy city.

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[1] "The Mind," #63, p. 38.

[2] Ibid., #45, p. 71.

[3] Ibid.

Like Winthrop's "city upon a hill," Edwards' society of being would be tightly knit together by love. No thing could go its way alone. Like Winthrop's city, Edwards' society also assumed a fundamental antithesis in things. The rule of beauty provided the foundations for the principle of limitation. As Nicolson has observed, Newton's uniform laws lent support to an "ethics of limitation" and an "aesthetics of order and proportion."[1] So Edwards found in the notion of excellence a rule for the determination of "true" and "false." "That which is beautiful, considered by itself separately, and deformed, considered as a part of something else more extended; or beautiful, only with respect to itself and a few other things, and not as a part of that which contains all things--the Universe--; is false beauty and a confined beauty."[2] It provided, in effect, a rationale for the determination of the elect. One could consent to being or dissent and to dissent from the society of being was to risk expulsion from the "university of things." Indeed the sovereign rule of beauty would be as full of terror as any arbitrary divine will. In his relationship with the excellency of being, man will discover the old mystery of salvation or damnation, for "disagreement or contrariety to Being, is evidently an approach to Nothing . . . ."[3] To dissent was to be cast into the outer darkness.

Edwards began his life in a Puritan household in which the vision of order remained very much alive. Even when he found that he had to reject the "old logick" and eventually some of the old federal theology, he by no means found it possible to surrender the conviction that God was

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[1] From Mountain Gloom . . . , p. 272.

[2] "The Mind," #13, pp. 100-101.

[3] Ibid., #45, p. 72

a God of order. Edwards had, in effect, carried the Puritan commonwealth to the cosmic level but it there provided no less a compelling vision. In its light Edwards could find once again a model for the millenial church: "It will be a time of excellent order in the church of Christ, ... All the world shall then be as the church, one orderly, regular, beautiful society. And as the body shall be one, so the members shall be in beautiful proportion to each other."[1] But in reaffirming the old Puritan sense of order, an order pertaining both to the cosmos and the society of the elect, Edwards had considerably altered the character of the Puritan faith. To the apprehension of an order of rational beauty Edwards brought both his vivid sense of divine immediacy and the knowledge of nature's uniform law. Edwards found them to be one and the same thing. In some respects this conviction is not far removed from that of Puritans, like Willard, who felt that "logical notions" could be put upon God. Puritans too had been cognizant of the law of nature. For Puritanism, however, these assertions were more humanistic than scientific. As Willard put it, the concept of natural law was used, "restrainedly relating to the Nature of Man, because it was fitted to his Nature . . . ."[2] Under the impact of the new natural philosophy, the terms of this agreement were being modified. When it became evident that the supreme embodiment of reason was to be found in the uniform and immutable notions of the physical universe, "natural law" moved away from its traditional association between reason and virtue and took on the characteristics of the mechanical model. A marriage was consummated between natural law and the "unalterable rectitude" of nature. Edwards carried forward this

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[1]"The History of the Work of Redemption," Works, III. 408.

[2]Willard, p. 191.

transformation by the virtual identification of God's providential order with the order of nature as he interpreted it. The order of providence thus became far more unyielding than it had ever been for the Puritan advocates of predestination or the platform of divine ideas. This was the God of order par excellence. With this scheme in mind the divine beauty or excellence was irrevocable. Edwards could not tolerate those theological devices which seemed to weaken the rigor of the divine sovereignty. Puritan "accomodation" was banished and it was, no doubt, this banishment which made "God Glorified . . ." so disturbing a piece of rhetoric.

PART TWO

THE NEW SENSE OF GLORY

CHAPTER VI

GOD'S FURNACE

The preaching of the Word and the life of the society of saints went hand in hand. In no other single activity were the various facets of the Puritan enterprise brought together in quite so meaningful a way. The sermon was at once an act of adoration, an affirmation of the godly life, and the center of attention for the elect community. Here the careless were awakened and the uncertain inspired. Here scripture, the common charter of Puritan life, was unfolded in its wealth of meanings. Here, as nowhere else, the godly life was given its definition and direction. The preaching task was, in a very real sense, the heart beat of the Holy Commonwealth. When Jonathan Edwards took his place in Northampton's pulpit he was thrust into the center of the affairs of the now faltering Puritan enterprise. It was through the medium of the sermon that he would endeavor to keep alive the vision of the godly life. It was in the sermon that he would bend his own vision of the society of being in order to minister to the needs of the earthly society of the saints. Edwards applied himself to this weighty task and his efforts were not in vain.

Behind him there lay the work of a notable body of Puritan preachers who had given thoughtful attention to the work of the pulpit. They had often characterized the ideal style of the preacher as one of "plainness." The task of the preacher was to achieve, as Governor

Bradford said, "a singular regard unto the simple truth in all things."[1] He was under an obligation to lay such simple truth in plain view of the people. For the Puritan rhetoric was more than a matter of taste. Its import was both moral and metaphysical. "When it is most naked," said Sibbes of the gospel truth, "it is most lovely and powerful."[2] The truth was simple, or so they thought, and the paramount end of the sermon was the clear and unadorned presentation of that truth in terms of the spiritual life. The structure of the sermon was intended to reflect this standard of plainness. The text was opened, the doctrine stated, the reasons unfolded and the application made. When argument and application were done the sermon abruptly ended without peroration. If the reforms of Ramus and Richardson were utilized in this task it was because they offered a commendable model of simplicity.

Here again the achievement of simplicity found application to the ideal of the elect community. It was manditory that the message of the gospel be brought within reach of the common man. The very structure of the sermon, as has been noted, made possible a ready grasp of the basic points presented. The listener could thus participate in the argument of the preacher and carry home its main conclusions. Simplicity did not, however, mean barrenness. Within the standards of the plain style Puritan preachers could construct sermons marked not only by simplicity but by warmth and relevance. The urgency of the spiritual life infused itself into the presentation and the need to communicate to common men

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[1] Richard Sibbes, The Bruised Reed and the Smoking Flax, (London, 1824), p. 22.

[2] Cited by K. E. Murdock, Literature and Theology in Colonial New England (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), p. 80. Cf. Babette May Levy, Preaching in the First Half of New England's History (Hartford, Conn.: Society of Church History, 1945).

brought forth the homely imagery which occurs so often in the work of Sibbes and Hooker as well as other practitioners of plain preaching. In short, the presentation of the naked truth was generally guided by the principle of accommodation. The preacher often had a way of keeping the strenuous demands of the godly ideal close to the common ways of life.

In line with the principle of accommodation one frequently notes a certain spirit of moderation in the sermons of the early Puritan masters. "It is more suitable to the Spirit of Christ to incline to the milder part, and not to kill a fly on the forehead with a bottle; nor shut men out of heaven for a trifle."[1] The observation of Sibbes does not seem to be exceptional. If the spiritual life was an affair of extreme difficulty, the pastor did not desire to press his people beyond the limits of their endurance. Hence the quest of the godly life was often eased by a generous measure of encouragement. Samuel Willard's word of assurance is indeed conventional: "Let not your hearts be troubled, but rejoice in the midst of all your combats. Let this be your satisfaction, that tho' foiled, you shall not be vanquished; tho' distressed, yet not forsaken."[2] In this assurance the Puritan is exhibiting once more that sense of proportion which was fundamental to the ideal of the Puritan way. Even in the midst of a discourse on "Christian Warfare," John Downame paused to counsel, "we must keepe us in the golden meane."[3] God's garden demanded tender care. It could not flourish if zeal was cultivated without restraint. Once again the desire for order and proportion becomes a determining factor in the pursuit of the Holy

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[1]Sibbes, p. 25.

[2]Willard, p. 523.

[3]Downame, p. 90.

Commonwealth. As the venerable John Cotton had it, "faith is like a poyse, it keeps the heart in an equall frame . . . ."[1] So long as Puritan faith remained reasonably whole that sense of proportion applied to Puritan rhetoric as it did to the ideal of the elect community. Indeed they were mutually dependent.

Because the manner of preaching and the life of the sacred community were so closely tied to one another, it is not surprising that the changing circumstances of the elect society in New England should have occasioned an alteration in sermon style. In the second generation of the saints the crisis of New England Puritanism began. So effectively had the standards of purity been maintained, so closely had the visible Church come to approximate the invisible, that the Half-way Covenant became necessary to sustain the Church's historical embodiment. As the second generation began to drift away from the high calling of their fathers the covenant scheme had to be revised lest the Church cease to be. It was an attempt to restore the spiritual scheme to a significant place in the socio-historic order.[2] At the same time the character of the Church's preaching began to change. The discomfort which arose with the awareness that the original terms of the covenant had not been adhered to reflected itself in a shift to a more strident tone. The attention of New England's preachers began to move from the anticipation of the Holy Commonwealth to an increasing emphasis upon the consequences of New England's declension. Sermons began to be less expositions of the spiritual life than definitions of the calamity which ensued from man's infidelity to the terms of the covenant. In this endeavor to keep alive

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[1] "Christian Calling," in Miller and Johnson, The Puritans, I. 324.

[2] Morgan, Visible Saints, p. 138.

the central importance of the Church-covenant the threat of judgment had become a sanction for the spiritual life.

During the 1670s the insistent theme of punishment began to enlarge itself beyond the interpretation of historical disaster to include a growing concern for eternal punishment beyond history. Gradually the urgency of a divine judgment in the events of New England's history began to transfer itself into an apocalyptic fervor. Samuel Danforth offered this scenario of judgment in a sermon preached in 1674:

> Hasten you after your lecherous kindred into the stinking lake: sit down with your Brethren and Sisters in the depths of hell. As you have partaken with them also in their sordid Pleasures, partake with them also in the Plagues and Torments. Let the lustful Body be everlasting Fuel for the unquenchable fire: Let Thy lascivious soul be eternal Good for the never-dying Worm. Let Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish be thy portion world without end. Hell from beneath is moved to meet thee . . . .[1]

This horror-filled picture possessed a long history stretching back to the late medieval preoccupation with the Dies Irae and the biblical Apocalypse. The imagery it embodies did not belong solely to Puritanism nor does it typify the preaching of early Puritanism. Yet it was part of the complex of Puritan beliefs and, as Danforth and Stoddard were to discover, there was an efficacy in such preaching. Through six decades of the ministry of Solomon Stoddard, Northampton had become familiar with his invocation of terror. The "harvests" resulting from this new style of preaching had helped to make the Northampton congregation the most important in the New England interior.

The young pastor assuming Stoddard's mantle would be expected to prove his mettle in the work which the patriarch of the Connecticut Valley had begun. He was to succeed in this task beyond all expectations. In Edwards, New England Puritanism had found someone who spoke with a

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[1]Cited by Levy, p. 56.

will to prevail and with words that reached the heart. In 1734 the first wave of the Great Awakening broke from the meeting house of Northampton.

Edwards apparently followed Stoddard's lead and took up the theme of judgment from the beginning of his pulpit career. In a sermon which may be dated as early as 1727 he was telling the congregation that men seek salvation out of a fear of the dreadfulness of punishment.[1] In pronouncing this conviction Edwards was simply restating a truth which by then was fairly conventional. The theme of judgment was not, in itself, unusual. Even Charles Chauncy, later to be Edwards' determined critic, could not refrain from this useful device. As late as 1741 he could exclaim in a Thursday lecture: "There is nothing betwixt you and the place of blackness, of darkness, but a poor frail, uncertain life. You hang as it were, over the bottomless pit, by the slender thread of life, and the moment that snaps asunder, you sink down into perdition . . . ."[2] Edwards' utterances at Enfield were not, then, unique. He did bring to this task, however, a peculiar understanding of the way in which the preacher should go about his work. In the same sermon in which he designates the motivation for salvation as fear of judgment he also describes the objectives of the preacher in setting forth that truth.

The problem of preaching, as Edwards understands it, is to see to it that the condition of man "is more plainly set before their eyes than it once was."[3] As he told the people of Northampton, "the great part of men have not a lively sensible apprehension of the wrath of God

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[1]Sermon: Genesis 19:14 (Yale Rare Book Collection). The date is suggested by that of the broadside used by Edwards for sermon paper.

[2]Cited by Gaustad, p. 86.

[3]Sermon: Genesis 19:14 (Yale Rare Book Collection).

and of eternal punishment. It never was set before their Eyes and brought into clear view . . . ."[1] It was the preacher's task not merely to spell out the simple truth of the spiritual life or even to increase the sense of urgency in the faithful by appeals to past perfection or future judgment but to represent adequately the spiritual predicament of men. It was Edwards' judgment that the crisis in the drama of salvation hinges upon the ability to see that which in fact is. It is the right sense of seeing which is bestowed upon the recipients of grace and the rectification of an erring vision which is the fate of the damned. "Their eyes in many respects shall be thoroughly opened in hell. Their judgments will be rectified. They shall be of the same judgments with the godly. They shall be convinced of the reality of those things which they would not be convinced of here . . . ."[2] In the end all men will apprehend but only some will have the full, perfect and sufficient vision of the saints. It is the work of the preacher to make men see now, and in this effort the sermon would be an exercise in representation.

The quest of the "lively sensible apprehension" was a continuation of the Puritan concern for "lively knowledge" or "knowledge with a taste;" however, this old metaphor had been transformed into a new epistomology. In that new world of which Edwards was a part, the act of perception had become the critical focus of knowledge. For Locke, all of the universe that man can know is borne to him through the perception of the simple atoms of sensation upon which we reflect and construct the complex notion of the divine.[3] Perception was, moreover, primarily visual. The

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Sermon: Psalm 94:8-11, Works, VII. 28-29.

[3] Locke, II. xxiii. 33.

idea is first an image and not an intellective thing. The understanding deals in images, reflecting upon them and building its more complex notions from them. The image is in this case something more than an emblem of truth; now it is the stuff of reality itself. One does not ascend to ideas from images but negotiates directly with the images given in perception.[1]

Locke may have offered other clues to the character of the world of the man of perception. In the first place he suggested that the simple ideas are irresistable.[2] Once offered to the mind they cannot be refused. In the second place, regarding what is perceived, man is a creature of inclination and prejudice.[3] Man not only perceives the world through the ideas but he is at once engaged in responding to his perceptions in one manner or another. Perceptions are encountered as agreeable or disagreeable, as pleasurable or painful.[4] The implications of these suggestions would not be lost on the Northampton pastor. People must be made to see; they must be presented with that complex of images which will bring the "lively sensible apprehension." Edwards was offering a configuration of lively pictures which could not be rejected. In setting truth plainly before the eyes of his congregation, he was calling for an unavoidable decision in love or hate.

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[1] "Since ideas are images, since even complex ideas are multiple pictures, and since understanding itself is a form of perception, the visual and the intellectual would tend to become amalgamated." Tuveson, p. 73.

[2] "These simple ideas, when offered to the mind, the understanding can no more refuse to have, nor alter . . . than a mirror can refuse, alter, or obliterate the images or ideas which the objects set before it do therein produce." Locke, II. i. 25.

[3] Locke, II. xxi. 23.

[4] Miller, Jonathan Edwards, p. 67.

In propounding his images or "ideas," Edwards was at once aware of their metaphorical quality and yet convinced that this characteristic in no way compromised their urgent validity. Truth is first in the order of nature[1] and the task of the preacher was to bind men to their cosmic condition by showing them the truth. The images are components of experience, not analogical steps to a transcendent truth. The "lively pictures" compounded by the preacher are representations of that which is. Edwards could acknowledge that Hades is a condition and not a place[2] but not for a moment was this intended as an amelioration of the scheme of punishment. The torments of hell are "literally as great as they are represented by fire and brimstone, a lake of fire and the like."[3] The vision invoked by Edwards is direct and irrevocable. He shared the belief of earlier Puritans that the truth that is "most naked" is most powerful. Unlike earlier Puritans, however, Edwards no longer relieved the nakedness by any principle of accommodation. He seldom bends to the picturesque. His guiding principle was not that of accommodation but rather clarity of apprehension. "I am not afraid to tell sinners who are most sensible of their misery, that their case is indeed as miserable as they think it to be, . . . for this is the truth."[4] The idea was both that which was perceived and the expression of an objective order of truth. A man either comes to see things as they are, and so consents to

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[1] "The real truth of a proposition is in the order of nature first, before its being believed to be true." Edwards in letter to Gillespie cited by Dwight, Works, I. 289.

[2] "Hades, signifies the state of the dead and not their place/it is/ a metaphorical expression . . . ." Miscellanies, 60.

[3] Miscellanies, 279.

[4] "Thoughts on the Revival," Works, IV. 163.

being, or he fails to see and is rejected.[1]

To the strength of this conviction Edwards added his understanding of the immutable character of truth which had first been propounded in the college notes. According to that vision God was a God of unalterable order, an order which seemed, to Edwards, to be not only a uniform and universal system but a system exhibiting beauty as well.

Edwards never had reason to doubt that that system of beauty prescribed certain limitations upon existence. The unharmonious would not possess the same privileges as the harmonious. A line could be drawn according to this rule of beauty nor did Edwards ever doubt that such a line was divinely drawn. There was darkness in this lovely world as well as light. As a boy he had observed the flying spider floating gradually but inevitably to its doom in the ocean expanse and he accepted its annihilation, as much as its creation, as part of the admirable wisdom of God. To Edwards, scripture, theology and experience all confirmed the evident process of election in nature as well as in history. It was an unquestioned fact that many are called and few are chosen. "That so vast and innumerable a multitude of blossoms that appear on a tree, so few come to ripe fruit, and that so few of so vast a multitude of seeds as are yearly produced, so few come to be a plant . . . seem to be lively types how few are saved out of the mass of mankind."[2] The very existence of God's garden implied the fact of the weeds and wild growths which could have no part in that well-kept garden. Puritanism had often attempted to mitigate the stringency of this vision but it could not deny it altogether without undermining the very notion of the elect community. Edwards

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[1]Sermon: Romans 2:10, Works, VIII. 233.

[2]Images and Shadows of Divine Things, p. 65.

accepted both in reaffirming the doctrine of the sovereignty of God in election and damnation. Indeed he found reason in his philosophical studies to support this "truth." If the universe of the new world of philosophy did not specify a literal hell, it did nonetheless point to an unalterable order, a beauty or excellency that would not tolerate disorder or dissent. It was in the rule of excellence, an excellence which seemed incarnate in the universe, that Edwards found confirmation of the old Puritan dogma of election. Beauty, in Edwards' mind, became identical with justice. He was not disturbed, as Arminians were, by the fact that loveliness should condemn the unlovely, that light should define the darkness. Before his vision Edwards did not blink: "The terribleness of God is part of his glory . . . ."[1]

It was in the latter months of 1733 that the tempo of urgency began to increase in Northampton. In the following year Edwards' labors reached a climax following the discourse on "Justification by Faith." The invocation of justice then reached its height in the sermon, "The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners." Here the imprecatory scheme erupts with full force. Edwards wasted little time in setting forth the truth. Men are full of sin; "their guilt is like great mountains, heaped one upon another, till the pile is grown up to heaven."[2] At the same time he is at pains to remind his people that God is under no obligation: "it is meet that God should order all these things according to his own pleasure."[3] Having spelled out the doctrine of man's sin and God's free grace, Edwards turns to the extensive applications where he is free to

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[1] Miscellanies, 407.

[2] Sermon: Romans: 3:19, Works, V. 503.

[3] Ibid., p. 506.

drive home the lesson to "sinners who are afraid of damnation."[1] "You are afraid that it will be your portion to suffer eternal burnings; and your fears are not without grounds; you have reason to tremble every moment. But be you never so much afraid of it, let eternal damnation be never so dreadful, yet it is just."[2] This is the point to which Edwards frequently returns. God is just. The discourse continues with a lengthy recital of the wickedness which causes the displeasure of God--the dishonoring of parents, malice toward neighbors, covetousness, pride, lasciviousness, sensuality. Could God have mercy in the face of such things? Seeing that men have abused mercy, trampled upon the divine law, and rejected the momentous gift of Jesus Christ, could the pangs of damnation come as any surprise? Edwards pressed on: "Seeing that you thus disregard so great a God, is it a heinous thing for God to slight you, a little, wretched, despicable creature; a worm, a mere nothing and less than nothing; a vile insect, that has risen up in contempt against the majesty of heaven and earth."[3] There was no route of escape for so miserable a creature.

> God may utterly disregard your tears and moans, your heavy heart, your earnest desires, and great endeavours; and he may cast you into eternal destruction, without any regard to your welfare, denying you converting grace, and giving you over to Satan, and at last cast you into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, to be there to eternity, having no rest day or night, for ever glorifying his justice upon you in the presence of the holy angels . . . .[4]

The horror of Edwards' imagery is unrelieved by any assurance of mercy. In the "great furnace" of divine wrath the ungodly will writhe with "dismal cries and shrieks."[5] In such pictures the message of election and judgment was driven home to the hapless congregation. The sermon was

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[1] Ibid. [2] Ibid., p. 507. [3] Ibid., p. 513. [4] Ibid., p. 530.
[5] Miscellanies, 237.

perhaps the most extreme of Edwards' various efforts to represent the truth of man's predicament.

The only release for the terrified was the full and unqualified acknowledgement of the justice of God. When all self-sufficiency has been purged, then the divine constitution may be accepted as it is. "Sometimes at the discovery of it," Edwards relates, "they can scarcely forbear crying out 'It is Just! It is Just!' Some express themselves, that they see the glory of God would shine bright in their own damnation . . . ."[1] Only afterward, may come the "gracious discoveries" of divine mercy. Edwards was supremely convinced of the truth of this picture and he was uncompromising in its application.

To speak with Rufus Suter of "a cold, impartial, scientific objectivity" in Edwards' "apotheosis of justice"[2] is hardly to overstate the case. Despite the extreme nature of the imagery employed in "The Justice of God in the Damnation of Sinners" the impact of such sermons was not derived simply from the invocation of terror. Nor can the impact of such sermons be found in any indulgence on the part of Edwards in emotional extravagance. In comparison with Whitefield's histrionics the thin-voiced delivery of Edwards must have seemed pale indeed. Rather one must look to the coherence of intention which distinguished the preaching of Edwards. Behind the horror there lay the consistent appeal to an irrevocable order. Justice had attained the inevitableness of natural law. In Edwards the Puritan quest for order had been given a rationale and a precision which it had never before enjoyed. Never before had the "naked truth" been quite so unyielding.

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[1] "Narrative of Conversions," Works IV. 39.

[2] "The Strange Universe of Jonathan Edwards," Harvard Theological Review LIV (April, 1961), 126.

Neither would it be wide of the mark to speak of Edwards' apotheosis of beauty, for the demand for vindication was in fact intimately connected with the apprehension of the excellency of God. In Edwards' vision there was neither love nor pity for that which established itself apart from the order of being which was the order of beauty. Divine justice is rooted in the fact that "God is a being infinitely lovely" and to that infinite beauty man has an absolute and universal obligation.[1] Indeed it is the obligation imposed by the order of beauty which generates the demand for punishment. It is not that God is obliged to punish for the sake of justice but rather that there is a fitness and propriety which is incumbent upon creatures to observe.[2] The exercise of "mere sovereignty without regard to propriety" would tear the fabric of being and destroy the fit proportion so requisite to divine excellence.[3] Decorum, then, is the prime law of being and "disagreement or contrariety of Being" the only evil.[4] The many excursions into hell's fire are made necessary by the vision of inexorable beauty.

> 'Tis certainly natural and regular in its own nature that at last there should be a separation of good and bad that the good and excellent may be together and the wicked together and the present mingled state considered without regard to a future separate state to which things tend is certainly confusion and contrary to general beauty and regularity.[5]

It was Edwards' profound and abiding conviction that "God does everything

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[1] Sermon: Romans 3:19, Works, V. 501.

[2] Miscellanies, 306.

[3] Miscellanies, 1331, 1346.

[4] Edwards never departs from the judgment of his college notes. Cf. "The Mind," #1, p. 42.

[5] Miscellanies, 169.

beautifully."[1] So it was in the narrow pass of redemption where the movements of redemption were understood to be the rectification of loveliness. The sermon becomes an effort toward the awakening of the unseeing to the divine beauty which is to be made manifest in the moral order of justice as in the natural order of creation. "'Tis reasonable to suppose that these will be as publickly visible as the brightness and beautifull order and motions of the heavenly bodies and the regular successions of the various seasons of the year and the beauties of nature in the air and on the face of the earth."[2] For the Puritan, as Haller has written, beauty had either to be wholly incorporated or wholly banished from the cosmos.[3] In the case of Edwards beauty came to be constitutive of being itself. Folded within the loveliness of being were all the mysteries of existence, including its terror.

The tendency to see beauty written in the immutable laws of the universe or, as Edwards has it, "the mechanical laws of nature," served to support the rigid identification of the divine with the immutability of nature's laws.

> So much evidence of the most perfect exactness of proportion harmony equity and beauty in the mechanical laws of nature and other methods of providence which belong to the course of nature which are by which God shews his regard to harmony fitness and beauty in what he does as the Governor of the natural world may strongly argue that he will maintain the most strict and perfect justice in proportion and fitness in what he does as the Governor of the moral world.[4]

Moreover, it is necessary that the harmony, fitness and beauty of the moral order be as fully manifest as that of the "mechanical laws of nature." "The moral deformity and confusion of the world is most publick. It stands forth continually in view through all ages. It is fit that the

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[1] Ibid., 314.

[2] Ibid., 1007.

[3] Haller, p. 308.

[4] Miscellanies, 1196.

rectifying of this deformity and disorder . . . should also be made publickly visible . . . ."[1] The law must be immutable for, otherwise, it would not exhibit the characteristics of law; it must be publicly observed if we are to judge one another's actions;[2] it must be fulfilled "in every puntilio"[3] lest anarchy reign; it must be enforced by coercion lest the regulation become ineffectual. So emerges the vision of an orderliness embedded in the conception of a universe wherein the movement of the least blade of grass has an effect upon the whole. It is a moral universe as seen through the vision of the Puritan Holy Commonwealth but it is a moral universe delineated according to a standard of beauty enforced as invariable, "mechanical law." A reversal has taken place in which the concept of natural law which had traditionally, in Willard's phrase, been "fitted" to the nature of man[4] now becomes associated with a view of uniform law to which man must manifest his fitness. Failing of this obligation a man becomes responsible for an "unanswerableness" in things which is at once the denial of excellence and the movement by which he establishes himself as an "outcast of the universe."[5] Edwards did not indulge in the preaching of terror for its own sake nor did he make use of it for the pragmatic reasons that motivated so many later revivalists. He saw a universe of inexorable beauty and in that beauty he saw the old meaning of the Puritan commonwealth writ large. So long as there was beauty there would be those who would not see it. Hell is the anguish of those who have seen after the moment for vision is past. In such a universe there would always be those who see and those who do not. Thus

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[1] Ibid., 1007.

[2] Miscellanies, 1007.

[3] Ibid., 779.

[4] Willard, p. 150.

[5] The phrase is Hawthorne's as cited by E. H. Davidson, "From Locke to Edwards," Journal of the History of Ideas, XXIV (July, 1963), 371.

he sought to bind his people to the fundamental terms of the Puritan, the terms imposed by the doctrine of election.

CHAPTER VII

"ALL ONE WORK, ONE DESIGN"

As the extraordinary events of the Awakening swept through Northampton it seemed to Edwards that the town was close to paradise. There were many conversions; the young talked of pious things. In the frequent public assemblies there was weeping and distress. The town seemed to be full of God's presence. Edwards was even tempted to think that America was the new Israel in which the "Latter-Day Glory" was about to begin. If the great work should continue, prophesied Edwards, "it would make New England a kind of heaven upon earth."[1] But the work was not to continue, as Edwards hoped it would. Satan seemed to take a hand in it. Even the initial report given in the "Narrative of Surprising Conversions" admits certain "Imprudences" and unregulated zeal. Almost from the start Edwards had taken careful note of the difficulties, the discouragement and melancholia which accompanied the revival. After the arrival of Whitefield in 1740 difficulties increased. In his trail this controversial and unconventional figure left a host of problems, discords, and disorders. He came to Boston in September 1740 and visited Northampton the same month; in November Edwards was alluding in a sermon to the troublesome problem of the falseness of sudden conversions.[2] Edwards was compelled to defend the revival and to answer for its extravagances.

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[1] "Thoughts on the Revival," Works, IV. 128.

[2] Sermon: Matthew 13:5-6 (Unpublished sermon, Yale Rare Book Collection).

In 1741 he published The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit in which he endeavored to argue the validity of the Awakening in spite of its disorder and irregularity. Another apology came in the following year under the title Some Thoughts on the Revival. These efforts, however, would have little effect in the face of the extraordinary emotions, the bitterness and the general disregard of propriety stemming from the revival. Nothing like it had been seen in New England before. Enthusiasms were undisciplined; church order was breaking down. Opposition was mounting and by the end of 1743 was firmly established. The stamp of extravagance, disorder, and unreason had been placed upon the activities of the Great Awakening. Edwards would lament the fact that the "cunning serpent" had prevailed "to deprive us of that fair prospect, we had a little while ago, of a kind of paradisaic state of the church of God in New England."[1] It had become clear that the Awakening would not preserve the "city upon a hill."

As the fortunes of the revival began to fade, Edwards undertook a major reappraisal of its meaning and of the theology which had provided its foundations. That much had been bad he was prepared to admit but he was not prepared to surrender the fundamental terms upon which the Awakening had been predicated. On the one hand, he undertook a defense of the affections as a viable part of the religious life. On the other hand, he argued anew for the fundamental tenet of Puritan orthodoxy, the sovereignty and priority of the divine order. The godly life cannot be an aimless adventure. Edwards would insist with Hooker that the life of the saints would not be nurtured on "wild Thyme" but would be raised up in "God's

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[1]Religious Affections, p. 87.

garden." In the affair of redemption "it was all one work, one design."[1]

> As it began in God, so it ends in him. God is the infinite ocean into which providence empties itself.--Providence is like a mighty wheel, whose circumference is so high that it is dreadful, with the glory of the God of Israel above upon it; as it is represented in Ezekiel's vision. We have seen the revolution of the wheel, and how, as it was from God, its return has been to God again. All the events of divine providence are like the links of chain; the first link is from God, and the last is to him[2]

While the emphasis on the affections might seem to contradict the vision of that divine order in which every link is in its proper place, it did not seem so to Edwards. He was prepared to argue, as Winthrop had argued before him, that the divine society must be one and not diverse. The will and the affections of the creature must cohere with the divine constitution. Such is the burden of Edwards' two most substantial works, the Treatise Concerning Religious Affections and the dissertation on Freedom of the Will.

Edwards was not unaware of how much had been pernicious in the emotionalism of the revival but he refused to reject it altogether. The work on Religious Affections is an attempt to take a responsible position in regard to the enthusiasm which was prompted by the Awakening. Much is to be rejected. The strength of the affections is no sign of their validity, nor is the fact that they "have great effects on the body."[3] Nothing can be determined in regard to the authenticity of one's religion by the fact that an experience is accompanied by much terror or is given in some particular order. Nothing can be guaranteed by the fact that persons are given to talk much of religion or are zealous in church

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[1] "The History of the Work of Redemption," Works, III. 169.

[2] Ibid., p. 428.

[3] Religious Affections, p. 135. None of this can be used to argue against the validity of the religious experience on the other hand.

attendance or are supremely confident of their state of grace. Much is false; much can be counterfeited; much represents the work of gross "passions" rather than holy affections.[1] Yet it was impossible to do justice to the religious life without taking the affections into account. "As there is no true religion, where there is nothing else but affections, so there is no true religion where there is no religious affection."[2] After all, the argument continues, man is a creature of propensities. As he encounters the world, he is seldom neutral but is at once pleased or displeased, enraged or enraptured, zealous or disenchanted. This characteristic dynamic drives the world in all of its affairs. Without it life would be dull indeed; especially is this true of religion. It is impossible to consider man without considering him as a creature of affections. Edwards is endeavoring to breakdown the old tri-partite division of man. The will is not really distinct from the affections; nor is reason a faculty by itself. Reasoned judgments are never made in neutrality for the creature is always responding in pleasure of displeasure. Thought is, therefore, always a willful activity. But in establishing this point Edwards does not at all intend to declare that man as a creature is wholly surrendered to the waywardness of feeling. The "reasons of the heart" derive their validity from the truth which is apprehended. The apprehension of the heart which is proper to spiritual understanding is, for Edwards, a genuine understanding implying a commensurability between mind and object. The essence of religion lies in holy affection but the foundation of such holy affection lies beyond the heart.

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[1] "Passion" refers to those activities which are "more sudden, and whose effects on the animal spirits are more violent, and the mind more overpowered, and less in its own command." Ibid., p. 98.

[2] Ibid., p. 120.

The argument which begins with the affections leads to the declaration of the solidarity of the creature with the established order of the divine constitution.

This becomes clear when Edwards turns to the task of delineating the rightful "signs" of the authentic religious affections. Twelve such signs are set forth, the initial five representing the peculiar contribution of Edwards, the latter "signs" being the more traditional "fruits of the spirit." The argument begins with the assertion that religious affections arise from experience, from "a new inward perception or sensation." Gracious affections, holy love, are founded in "some apprehension, idea or sensation of mind."[1] Edwards is remaining faithful to the dictum of Locke concerning the priority of sense experience. This inward perception is, to be sure, distinctive. It is a sense of a different sort "which could be produced by no exalting, varying or compounding of that kind of perceptions or sensations which the mind had before."[2] It is "what some metaphysicians call a new simple idea."[3] Resorting to a metaphor familiar to Puritan writers of an earlier generation, Edwards describes the distinctiveness of this new inward perception or divine sense as like the taste of the honey in contrast to ideas of honey derived from other senses. But if the divine sense is both inward and in some manner unique, Edwards does not wish to suggest that it is in any way merely a private imagining. There is an objective ground for the religious affections, viz., the moral excellence and beauty of divine things as they are in themselves. The excellency of divine things must be "seen."

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[1] Ibid., pp. 207-208.

[2] Ibid., p. 205.

[3] Ibid.

They must be seen and relished not for any good that will be brought to the perceiver but for themselves alone. "The beauty of holiness is that thing in spiritual and divine things, which is perceived by this spiritual sense . . . this kind of beauty is the quality that is the immediate object of this spiritual sense; this is the sweetness that is the proper object of this spiritual taste."[1] The inherent good of man, the order of the heart, cannot be set adrift from the objective good, the excellence of being, the "holy, lovely majesty of God" himself. The chief characteristic of the divine sense was its establishment of a moral union, a conformity between the heart and God.

For Edwards this new perception was not identical with the ordinary perceptions of the world. At the same time spiritual knowledge was not to be opposed to knowledge of the physical world or to be identified exclusively with the incorporeal.[2] The apprehension of the heart was a genuine understanding of something objectively real. The affections "arise from some information in the understanding . . . some light or actual knowledge. The child of God is graciously affected, because he sees and understands something more of divine things than he did before . . . ."[3] After all, he who knows the taste of honey knows more than one who merely knows at second hand. His apprehension is an "ideal" one for he has given full value to the thing perceived.[4] Moreover, the mind

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[1] Ibid., p. 260.

[2] Ibid., p. 201.

[3] Ibid., p. 266. Edwards elsewhere writes: "All affections are raised either by light in the understanding or by some delusion in the understanding: for all affections do certainly arise from some apprehension in the understanding and that apprehension must either be agreeable to truth, or else be some mistake or delusion . . . . "Thoughts on the Revival," Works, IV. 157.

[4] Religious Affections, p. 274.

knows directly. It does not infer but senses. Through such lively apprehensions, Edwards maintained, reason is clarified and assisted. "It makes the speculative notions more lively. It assists and engages the attention of the mind to that kind of objects; which cause it to have a clearer view of them, and more clearly to see their mutual relations."[1] The order of glory is first in nature before it is apprehended by the heart. If one does not apprehend the moral beauty of divine things, if one does not know the divine righteousness, faithfulness and goodness, then "nothing is seen, that is worth seeing."[2] The reasons of the heart will either be agreeable with the truth that is "worth seeing" or they will err. The order of the heart will not be allowed to set itself adrift from that objective truth with which it must cohere.

Edwards' creature of the affections is then not unlike the saint of Winthrop's holy city. They are alike bound by the requirements of love to that "public" order which is the prior good. In the end the private heart must join itself to the public good and the manner of that adherence is holy love. Through the new inward perception the believer apprehends the excellence of divine things and in holy affections he consents in joyful fidelity to the truth perceived. Reasonable affections do not, therefore, detract from but rather enhance the solidarity of man with the society of being. Truth is one; the religious affections cannot exhibit the many. Edwards is arguing for the affections, but he is also appealing to ordered affections. It is the love and joy appropriate to God's garden.

The essay on The Freedom of the Will carries the argument for

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[1] Ibid., p. 307-8.

[2] Ibid., p. 274.

rational order from the affections to the willful activity of man. The object of the assault is not now unreasoned enthusiasm but the spectre of Arminianism for which he has even greater abhorrence. The Arminian advocacy of free will is subjected to a sustained attack through an appeal to the "full and perfect" interconnection of things.[1] That interconnection which obtains between the subject and object of a proposition affirming the existence of anything is a connection "in and of themselves," is grounded in that great concourse of events to which antecedent and consequent are equally bound. Again the great lesson of Newton for Edwards was that the events of the universe are mutually dependent one upon another, each upon all, and all upon each. "There is perhaps scarce any such thing, in being . . . but what has some dependence on other beings, with which they stand connected in the universal system of existence . . . . Thus it is with the tendencies observed in natural bodies, such a gravity, magnetism, electricity, &c."[2]

It is against this background that Edwards builds his discussion of the will. The moral activity of men is not exempt from the "universal system of existence:" "The whole state of the world of mankind, in all ages, and the very being of every person who has ever lived in it, in every age, since the times of the ancient prophets, has depended on more volitions, or acts of the wills of men, than there are sands on the sea-shore."[3] This conviction is brought to bear on the question of original sin. Edwards defends this "great Christian doctrine" against its detractors with scriptural and experiential evidence but his position finally

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[1] Freedom of the Will, p. 152.

[2] "The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended," Works, II. 325.

[3] Freedom of the Will, p. 250.

rests upon the conviction of the solidarity of man through history. Men are one in Adam by virtue of the divine establishment. This does not mean that the inheritance of sin is transmitted from one generation to another but rather that man is a constituent part of a whole. "Some things are entirely distinct and very diverse, which yet are so united by the established law of the Creator, that by virtue of the establishment, they are in a sense one. Thus a tree, grown great, and a hundred years old, is one plant with the little sprout . . . from whence it grew . . . though it is now so exceeding diverse . . . and perhaps not one atom the very same . . . ."[1] Thus the work on Original Sin builds the case for the universality of sinfulness upon the unity established by the divine constitution. The established order of successive events, as the "late improvements in philosophy" have demonstrated, is "nothing but the established order of the agency and operation of the author of nature."[2]

This solidarity to be discerned in the great panorama of human history extends to the moral activity of every individual. Man in his willful thought and activity is a unity. The traditional view had distinguished the will and the understanding as "two very diverse states of man."[3] For Edwards, man is thoroughly at one with himself. Thus in an early notation he observed that it was nonsense to argue about whether or not grace is irresistible for resistance would imply that man could be other than he is.[4] What a man wills, that he wills, and so he is. This argument found effective employment in the preaching of the Awakening.

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[1] "Original Sin," Works, II. 549.

[2] Ibid., p. 540.

[3] Calvin, I. xv. 7.

[4] Miscellanies, "o."

In the "Justification of God in the Damnation of Sinners," it is argued that, "if you are not willing to accept of Christ, it follows that you have no sincere willingness to be willing; because the will always necessarily approves of, and rests in its own acts."[1] Edwards' discussion in Freedom of the Will takes its stand upon this identity between the "will" and the act or inclination.

Locke had already maintained that the question of the freedom of the will was an absurdity, "liberty being as little applicable to the will, as swiftness of motion is to sleep, or squareness to virtue."[2] It is not the will but man that is free.[3] The power to dispose oneself according to preferences of the mind is not seated in a separate faculty but in the agent himself. Liberty is simply the power of an agent "to do or forbear doing any particular action according as its doing or forbearance has the actual preference in the mind . . . ."[4] To this extent the agent may be free. However, adds Locke, if by freedom of the will we mean the liberty to will or not to will, that is, to act or withhold action then the will is not at liberty: "For, it being unavoidable that the action depending on his will should exist or not exist, and its existence or not existence following perfectly the determination and preference of his will, he cannot avoid willing the existence or non-existence of that action . . . ."[5]

On these suggestions Edwards built his discussion of human willing as the activity in which the agent inclines toward or rejects that which is given in perception. It is the power or propensity of man to choose.

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[1] Sermon: Romans 3:19, Works, V. 523.

[2] Locke, II. xxi. 14.

[3] Ibid., II. xxi. 8.

[4] Ibid., II. xxi. 15.

[5] Ibid., II. xxi. 23.

"In every volition there is a preference, or a prevailing inclination of the soul, whereby the soul, at that instant is out of a state of perfect indifference, with respect to the direct object of volition."[1] The object before the mind then becomes a motive toward which preference is expressed. Once an alternative is proposed, a motive given, the mind is not free to forbear inclining. A man who is walking and is asked to cease, is not free to suspend judgment; he must of necessity prefer one alternative to another. This man cannot avoid choosing and he will "choose" according to his inclinations. Inclinations, in turn, are governed by the "previous tendency" of the motive to excite or attract the agent. Whatever is perceived as the greatest good will thus induce the choice or inclination. "And therefore it must be true, in some sense, that the will always is as the greatest apparent good is."[2] Man thus comes to act as he apprehends the agreeableness or disagreeableness of the options given. As a man is so he perceives the world and as he perceives the world so he inclines and acts. The mind is therefore free to act according to its motives but given those motives it is bound to act as it does act. In this lies the moral necessity of man's nature.

By moral necessity is meant "that necessity of connection and consequence, which arises from such moral causes, as the strength of inclinations, or motives, and the connection which there is in many cases between these, and such certain volitions and actions."[3] Such "moral necessity" is distinguished from the natural limitations which every man must observe. The moral necessity of man is not a matter of coercion

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[1] Freedom of the Will, p. 140.

[2] Ibid., p. 142.

[3] Ibid., p. 156.

which makes it "impossible" for a man to act otherwise. Moral necessity is simply the propensity of a man to be what he is and this "necessity" is as absolute as that of nature to move according to its own constitution. "It must be allowed, that there may be such a thing as a sure and perfect connection between moral causes and effects . . . ."[1]

Having found in human volition a "necessity" not unlike that of physical nature, Edwards goes on to complete his argument for solidarity by building a metaphysical bridge. "On the whole, it is clearly manifest, that every effect has a necessary connection with its cause, or with that which is the true ground and reason of its existence. And, therefore, if there be no event without a cause, . . . then no event is contingent . . . ."[2] The metaphysical certainty implicit in man's willful activity is every bit as sure as that of nature as a whole. For every event, moral or natural, there must be a reason. There can be no event without its sufficient reason, its prior ground. To speak of a free <u>will</u> is to describe a contingent activity which possesses no true ground. Applying a favorite lever, borrowed from Locke, Edwards argues that the Arminian notion of a free will would call for an antecedent determination of will, and then another exercise of the will yet prior to that and so on <u>in infinitum</u>.[3] In his view contingency becomes an absurdity for it would be the "No-cause" which rends the fabric of being.[4]

This is the crux of the argument. Arminianism would undermine the quest for a rational understanding of the universe by inserting a factor

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[1] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 157.

[2] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 216.

[3] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 194.

[4] "Remarks on Lord Kames' Essay," <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 455.

of contingency in the activity of man. It was the cause-effect principle which was the guarantee of the continuum of being. Upon "this grand principle of common sense" hangs our very proof of the being of God and only on the basis of this principle can the analogy between visible and invisible be maintained.[1] The Arminian argument would destroy the entire edifice of metaphysics: "For contingence is blind, and does not pick and choose for a particular sort of events. Nothing has no choice. This is No-Cause . . . ."[2] The integrity, the wholeness, the unity of being requires that there be a reason.

It goes without saying that the Arminian argument also undermined the foundations of the Puritan commonwealth, and here again one notices that the metaphysical argument has a practical application. Arminianism seemed to be destroying the symmetry of God's garden, and in its wake it left a massive breach through which countless men could escape pleading their innocence. By declaring for freedom the Arminian was in fact setting the individual apart from the solidarity inherent in the divine constitution. As Winthrop knew that the city of the saints could be built only by virtue of becoming a fabric "knit together by the bonds of love" so Edwards recognized that Arminianism was rending that fabric. For himself he was determined to keep it whole in so far as it was in his power. "All the events of divine providence are like the links of chain" and Edwards would do his best to keep the chain intact.

As the covenant society was collapsing around him under the burgeoning sense of individual autonomy and America was preparing to declare

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[1] Ibid., pp. 181-2.

[2] Ibid., p. 184.

its freedom from the old order, Jonathan Edwards defended to the last the notion of a closed, fixed order against the inroads of Arminianism. Edwards could not deny the new impulses toward freedom and variety; they were inherent in his own understanding of man as a creature of the will and the affections. But he would not accede to the fulness of their consequences. Edwards had no intention of issuing an invitation to waywardness. The doctrine of election, as Edwards understood it, demanded limitation, and limitation was not consistent with diversity. Truth is one, not many. Arminianism would turn the elect city into a wilderness. As Edwards saw it the many would have to give way to the One. It was perhaps with this in mind that he finally undertook to purge the kingdom of some of its diversity and unruliness by returning to the closed communion as practiced by Puritans before the time of Stoddard. In 1748 he announced that he could no longer receive candidates for church membership to full communion without a profession of saving grace. He went on to denounce the half-way covenant and advised a return to the strict practices of the first generation of Puritan settlers. Only on these terms, it seemed, could the purity of God's elect community be restored. Edwards had come full circle.[1] Only those would be admitted who could make a profession of their experience of saving grace. How else keep out the wild Thyme and restore order to the affairs of the holy community? It was the Puritan revolution all over again.

It was in a sense the logical conclusion of Edwards' faith in the God who sets some aside for salvation and rejects others to their damnation. In his own experience he had received the privileged sense of divine immediacy and found in that experience confirmation of the debated issue of

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[1]Morgan, Visible Saints, pp. 151-152.

divine sovereignty. God was All, God was sovereign, and what else could sovereignty mean but election? On the basis of this conviction Edwards took up responsibility for the church-covenant way, the company of the elect. In time he faced the problem of distinguishing elect from non-elect and so returned to the solution worked out in New England in the 1630s. It was the climax of Edwards' attempt to develop the implications of divine sovereignty for the church order. But Northampton was no longer prepared to support Edwards in his attempt to found the new society of the elect. They were not prepared to turn back the clock a full century or more. Church order there might be but it would not be the elect order, an order circumscribed and set aside by its special corporate calling. Northampton rejected the attempt to restore the closed communion and so rejected Edwards and his sovereign God.

CHAPTER VIII

"THE SPACE-MYSTIQUE"

To Edwards' mind religion was the "very Business and the noble business of intelligent beings."[1] Yet during the years in which the Great Awakening was in progress men of New England were also discovering that they had other business than that of the saints. As Professor Schneider comments: "New England, instead of making religion the business of life, gladly ventured to the life of business."[2] The very concession demanded--the recognition of private interest and the independent status of economic enterprise--were precisely the "secondary causes" which Edwards would not accept in his universe of glory. But New England was fundamentally of another mind. The salt of the Holy Commonwealth had lost its savor and the revival, for all of its zeal, had not succeeded in restoring the primitive faith of the society of saints. His attempt to restore the practice of a testimony of one's experience of regeneration, characteristic of the original New England church-covenant way, led to a break with his congregation. A long struggle ensued. As Edwards observed in a letter to Thomas Gillespie, "this controversy . . . has proved not only a controversy between me and my people, but between me and a great part of New England; there being many far and near that are warmly engaged in it."[3]

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[1] Miscellanies, "gg."

[2] Schneider, pp. 125-6.

[3] "Letter 4: Edwards to Gillespie," Religious Affections, p. 501.

The outcome was hardly in doubt, however. Northampton had had enough of Jonathan Edwards. The relationship between pastor and people was dissolved in June of 1750 and the following month Edwards preached his farewell sermon. After a period of uncertainty the Edwards family was settled in Stockbridge, Massachusetts the following year.

The revival, from one point of view, had failed, although Edwards himself never admitted as much. It had failed in the sense that it had not restored the waning fortunes of the Puritan Holy Commonwealth. It was not only unable to prevent the dissolution of the theocracy but, in the end, strengthened the forces which made for dissolution. Instead of revitalizing the Puritan ideals of restraint and proportion, it stimulated enthusiasm, novelty, and self-expression. Instead of creating a well-ordered society of the redeemed, it brought contention and disorder. The centrifugal forces released by the Awakening had been too great. Its piety had too often been purchased at the price of disrupting church-order. For others the distasteful display of emotionalism compelled a retreat from "piety to moralism" and reason. In either case what remained of the old synthesis of faith in its proper proportion had been torn asunder. The house of Puritanism was a shambles, and Edwards was compelled to retire from that community which had once seemed to him to herald the coming of the kingdom. In a move which can surely be regarded in its symbolic implications, Edwards took himself and his family to Stockbridge and the wilderness. Thus began the second, and as it turned out, the final major chapter of his career. In the half-dozen years remaining to him he put on paper the great works on the will, on "True Virtue" and "Concerning the End for which God Created the World" and "The Great Christian Doctrine of Original Sin Defended." Of this final period Herbert Schneider has written:

> In this retirement he wrote his great philosophical works. In these he put before the world once more the idea of the sovereignty of God, and this time not in the realm of church polity, not even in the wider realm of the religious affections, but in that eternal realm of philosophical speculation where the life of the imagination is free, where the exigencies of practical problems do not disturb the calm pursuit of distinct ideas, where the confusions of passions and the strife of parties can give place to the clarity of consistant thought and the finality of relentless dialectics.[1]

This "calm pursuit of distinct ideas" would not be undisturbed by keen distress. There were concluding replies to be returned as a result of the Northampton communion controversy. When Northampton was put from his mind there were the frustrating problems posed by the mission in which "philosophical speculation" was disturbed not only by the protracted struggle with the Williams family but after 1754 by the constant threat of Indian attack.[2] Edwards took up his thoughts concerning beauty, virtue and the divine end in a home stockaded against the Indians and quartering troops for the defense of the settlement. Yet there is a marked change in the character of Edwards' thought. Whether it is to be described as the undisturbed pursuit of "philosophical speculation" or simply the release of a mind too long cramped by the narrow demands of the church covenant way, in either case a new note is evidenced in this final period. If it is to be described in a single term, perhaps "enlargement" would come closest to describing the spirit of Edwards' work during the Stockbridge period. Largely absent is the imprecatory emphasis which has attracted so much attention in the Northampton preaching. The affairs of the tiny church and the Indian mission would place demands upon Edwards

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[1] Schneider, p. 134.

[2] "For the next three years there was scarcely a month in which those who remained in the settlement were not in actual danger. Hostle Indians without and treacherous Indians within kept the community in continual tension." Winslow, Jonathan Edwards, 1703-1758, p. 263.

but the church society no longer occupies the center of his attention as it previously had. Instead, the last significant writings take up the theme of divine glory in a broader scope. The essay on "The Nature of True Virtue," for example, sets man's obligation of benevolence within the larger community of being in general. One is struck by what Lewis has called Edwards' "bold extension of vision."[1] Taken out of the narrow arena circumscribed by the notion of the elect society, Edwards turned his attention to the greater society of being.

It is here that we can discern more clearly the other side of Edwards. The "new sense" of glory had confirmed to him the old faith in an electing God, a God whose providential order divides mankind into two cities. This theological scheme had come to inform the preaching of the Northampton period. He had engaged himself in the effort of urging men to consent to this unyielding scheme of divine justice. At the same time there was another side to that "new sense" of glory described in the "Personal Narrative," one which pointed to another form of piety than that embraced by the notion of an electing God and the consequences which seemed to follow upon that conception of divinity for Puritan faith. To gauge something of the significance of this other form of piety it will be necessary to retrace our steps to the college notes and the account of the "new sense" of glory given in the "Personal Narrative."

One of the peculiar traits of Edwards' early encounter with the new world of philosophy was his enchantment with the idea of space. This is particularly in evidence in the brief piece entitled "Of Being." The considerations there set down are of considerable importance for the later course of his thought. Edwards found himself struck by the apparent

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[1]Lewis, The American Adam, p. 64.

inability of the mind to conceive of nothing. "That there should absolutely be nothing at all is utterly impossible, the Mind Can never Let it stretch its Conceptions ever so much bring it self to Conceive of a state of Perfect nothing . . . ."[1] Every such attempt merely leads to the conclusion that the mind cannot but attribute an ontological status to that which it conceives. "If any man thinks that he Can think well Enough how there should be nothing I'll Engage that what he means by nothing is as much something as any thing that ever He thought of in his Life . . . ."[2] Try as one may, the apprehension of being cannot, to use a phrase of Henry More, be "disimagined." So convinced, Edwards finds himself led to the further conclusion that some being should eternally be, and since it is an absolute contradiction that Nothing should ever be conceived, that this being must be infinite, necessary, and omnipresent. What then fills this description of infinite, omnipresent, eternal being? Such characteristics cannot be associated with solidity for "Solidity surely is nothing but Resistance to other solidities" and is, therefore, finite. Infinite being can, however, be associated with space. "We find that we can with ease Conceive how all other being should not be, we can remove them out of our Minds and Place some other in the Room of them, but Space is the very thing that we can never Remove and Conceive of its not being . . . ."[3] Divide a space so that a void appears between the parts and yet there is space. To expel the apprehension of space would be to compel our thoughts to take refuge in a mathematical point, to "think of the same that the sleeping Rocks Dream of."[4] This train of thought brings the young Edwards to a truly remarkable conclusion:

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[1] "Of Being," Howard, p. 140. [2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 141. [4] Ibid., p. 141.

> It is self evident I believe to every man that space is necessary, eternal, infinite, and Omnipresent. But I had as Good speak Plain: I have already said as much as that Space is God, and it is indeed Clear to me, that all the Space there is, not proper to body, all the Space there is without the bounds of Creation, all the Space there was before the Creation, is God himself; and no body would in the least pick at it, if it were not because of the gross conceptions that we have of Space.[1]

"Space is God." Edwards was indeed speaking plainly and perhaps he never wrote so plainly again. He evidently drew back from this unorthodox position for this formula is never repeated again. Yet the association of divinity with the immediacy and self-evidence of space left an indelible mark.[2] Even in later years he could still rehearse the logic which brought him to the space-God:

> There is nothing else supposable to be but the being of God . . . . If there be, it is absolute and universal nothing. A supposition of something is a supposition of the being of God . . . . What we do when we go to think of absolute nihility . . . is only to remove one thing to make way for and suppose another. In this case there is no such thing as two parts of a disjunction. When we are come to being in general we come to one single point without disjunction. Therefore, God is, because there is no other way.[3]

There is little question that this insight came to him with great force for he returned to it frequently. And if he does not return to the identification of space with deity that enthusiastic espousal is nonetheless an important clue to the shaping of Edwards' mind and sensibilities. If it was a conclusion remarkable by any Puritan norm, it was also an indication of the extent to which the young Edwards had come to

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[1] Ibid., p. 140.

[2] In the notes on "The Mind" the absoluteness of space is qualified by the consideration that all existence is "mental"; however, this does not necessarily mute the force of the idea of space. "Space, as has been already observed, is a necessary being, if it may be called a being; and yet we have also shown, that all existence is mental . . . . Therefore it is a necessary being, only as it is a necessary idea . . . that is necessarily connected with other simple exterior ideas, and is, as it were, their common substance or subject." "The Mind," #9, p. 50.

[3] Miscellanies, 880.

share the visions which often accompanied the emergence of the new world of philosophy. One of the curious characteristics of more than one thinker entranced by the new world of philosophy was an enchantment with the notion of space. For many the vast reaches of the heavens seemed to manifest the very infinity of God.

The first steps toward this mystique of space had been taken during the Renaissance. Nicholas of Cusa, for one, had set forth his vision of God as everywhere equally near. For Nicholas the divine attribute of infinity had come to render obsolete the old metaphysical hierarchy with its degrees of being. If "infinity is neither greater nor less than anything"[1] then the approach to God cannot be made by way of metaphysical gradations of greater or less. Reviving the old Hermetic formula, Nicolas declared God to be the "infinite equality," the center and the circumference of all.[2] The world and God are everywhere equally near. It could be an intoxicating thought and was all the more so when later thinkers began to find in the vastness of the heavens revealed by the new astronomy the very embodiment of this omnipresent deity.[3] In England this association of the attributes of divinity with the notion of space began to generate interest sometime before the mid-seventeenth century.[4] Eventually it came to influence a major group of English

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[1] Nicholas of Cusa, The Vision of God, trans. Emma G. Salter (New York: Ungar Publishing Co., 1960), p. 63.

[2] Nicholas of Cusa, Learned Ignorance, trans. Germaine Heron (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), p. 108.

[3] This entire development has been discussed by Marjorie Hope Nicolson, From Mountain Gloom to Mountain Glory. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1959). Also Ernest Tuveson, The Imagination as a Means of Grace (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960).

[4] Tuveson finds the first expression of this enthusiasm in a sermon of Ellis Bradshaw, A Week-daies Lecture, a Continued Sermon to wit, The Preaching of the Heavens (1649), Ibid., p. 62.

thinkers from Henry More through Newton to Addison and Shaftesbury. In this curious chapter of the intellectual history of the time Henry More occupies an unusually important position.

In his Divine Dialogues More gave explicit and ecstatic recognition to the notion of the divine character of space. This was a matter both of profound religious sentiment and of great philosophical interest. In opposition to Descartes, More claimed extensiveness as a quality of spirit no less than of matter. Spirit is taken to be incorporeal substance and is extended through all space and time. In Immortality of the Soul he definites spirit as "A substance penetrable and indiscerpible."[1] More was uneasy about Descartes' dichotomy for it seemed to deny any "place" to the divine. As More knew, absolute perfection demanded that the divine be everywhere. His formula is the old Hermetic one utilized by Cusanus: God is the circle "whose Center is every where and Circumference no where."[2] Such omnipresence or ubiquity, More continues, "is everywhit as intelligible as the overspreading of Matter into all places."[3] At the same time, if spirit can be spatialized so, in turn, may space be divinized. It is this apprehension which appears with great vibrancy in the Divine Dialogues and in the Enchiridion Metaphysicum managed to transfer to the notion of absolute space some twenty attributes associated with the traditional concept of God.

Not everyone shared More's enthusiasm for the sacral character of space. Cudworth saw atheistic implications in the designation of space

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[1] "The Immortality of the Soul," Flora Isabel Mackinnon, Philosophical Writings of Henry More (New York: Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 65.

[2] Ibid., p. 69.

[3] Ibid.

as a divine attribute and Arthur Collier joined in this negative judgment:

> For this I appeal to every one's idea of an expanded universe, particularly to theirs, who (if I may guess) are not a few, who from consideration of the firm and substantial existence of the visible world, supposed by them to be external, think themselves compelled to believe, that simple space or extension is the very substance of God himself; and therefore how to conceive it possible that such a thing should exist, which on one hand we are compelled to call a creature, and on the other cannot forbear to understand as God I leave to be explained by those who yet retain any fondness for such a thing.[1]

Yet many did entertain such a fondness. Barrow accepted More's notion of an absolute space and in 1702 Joseph Rapheson published his De Spatio Reali defending the concept of space as a real entity. Samuel Clarke even found it necessary to caution certain "Gentlemen of Gloucestershire" against an excessive enthusiasm in this matter.[2] Locke and Berkeley were both critical though neither escaped the influence of the idea and as late as 1733 Isaac Watts entered the debate on the negative side.[3]

The most important commitment was to come from Isaac Newton. In his Opticks he wrote, "Does it not appear from Phaenomena that there is a Being incorporeal, living, intelligent, omnipresent, who in infinite Space, as it were in his Sensory, sees the things themselves intimately, and thoroughly perceives them wholly by their immediate presence to himself . . . ."[4] The General Scholium to the second edition of the

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[1] Clavis Universalis, in Metaphysical Tracts by English Philosophers of the Eighteenth Century, ed. Samuel Parr (London, 1837), p. 68.

[2] Cf. appendix to A Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God.

[3] For a survey of literature relevant to the controversy consult J. T. Baker, An Historical and Critical Examination of English Space and Time Theories from Henry More to Bishop Berkeley (Bronxville, New York: Sarah Lawrence College, 1930), pp. 46ff.

[4] Isaac Newton, Opticks; or a treatise of the reflections, refractions, inflections and colours of light. (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1931), p. 370.

Principia qualifies this position in the interest of making clear the divine transcendence;[1] however, by this time the question of the apotheosis of space had established itself as a decisive element in English thought during the first half of the eighteenth century.

For Newton the universe demanded an absolute. With the relativization of all local places, it was the One by which man might measure the movement of the many. But there was also a positive religious significance to the apotheosis of space. It constituted a defense of the divine sovereignty. As Samuel Clarke told Leibniz in his "third reply": "God, being Omnipresent, is really present to everything, Essentially and Substantially. His Presence manifests itself indeed by its Operation, but it could not operate if it was not There."[2] As the new cosmology was unfolded it seemed that God would either have to be immediately at work or be expelled from any effective role in the universe. This, Koyré observes, is the basic issue of the correspondence with Leibniz: "for Dr. Clarke the fight for void space, hard atoms and absolute motion becomes a fight for God's Lordship and presence . . . ."[3] The "space mystique" became at once a defensive position against atheism and a unique

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[1] "He is not eternity and infinity, but eternal and infinite; he is not duration or space, but he endures and is present. He endures forever and is everywhere present; and by existing always and everywhere, he constitutes duration and space. Since every particle of space is always, and every indivisible moment of duration is everywhere, certainly the Maker and Lord of all things cannot be never and nowhere . . ." Principia, trans. Andrew Motte, revised and supplied with an historical and explanatory appendix by Florian Cajori, (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1946), pp. 544-5.

[2] Leibniz-Clarke Correspondence, ed. with introduction and notes by H. G. Alexander (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), p. 85.

[3] Alexandre Koyré, From the Closed World to the Infinite Universe (New York: Harper Torchbook, Harper & Brothers, 1958), p. 272.

Affirmation of divine presence. The spacious universe emerged as a thing of revelatory significance. It was a revelation in which the young Edwards seems obviously to have shared.

But the new interest in the divine characteristics of space involved more than simply a relocation of God. This transference of value from the infinite God to the indeterminateness of space brought with it what Nicolson has termed a movement from the aesthetics of limitation to an "aesthetics of the infinite." Henry More not only exhibited an enthusiasm for the vastness of celestial space but he also found reason to appreciate those aspects of the terrestrial world which seemed to be analogues of space. Nature also, especially in its expressions of limitlessness, shared the mantle of divinity. The greatness which had once been the property of the transcendent God alone had reached out to vest itself in the vastness of space and the sublime in nature. Of More, Nicolson writes; "He forgot the Reason he had so carefully cultivated and gave free rein to his own native enthusiasm. He broke the bonds of finite time and space and shattered the Circle of Perfection from which he had formerly deduced an ethics and aesthetics of limitation, restraint and proportion."[1]

As Professor Nicolson has attempted to show, those who found themselves enchanted by space came also to discover a new dimension of grandeur in the physical world. The divinity which seemed to settle upon the natural world led men to acknowledge a beauty, a holiness which could no longer be encompassed by the old canons of aesthetics. Henry More began this movement in England. It is even more pronounced in men such as Addison and Shaftesbury. Addison (whom Edwards included in his list

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[1] From Mountain Gloom to Mountain Glory, p. 134.

of "men of great genius"[1]) is of particular interest since he directly connects his "enlargement" of the imagination with the advent of the new science.[2] The essayist was pleased to learn of the burgeoning life swarming on the leaf, the labyrinth of suns and worlds; he found himself "confounded with the immensity and magnificence of nature;"[3] he joined the chorus of praise for the sheer omnipresence of that divinity whose center is everywhere and circumference nowhere.[4] This sense of ecstasy over the boundlessness of space, moreover, comes to be associated with the uncommon, the great or even the terrible.[5] Hence the old norms of harmony and unity are displaced by a sense of the "rude kind of magnificence," "huge heaps of mountains, high rocks and precipices." Art, that is the proportioned and balanced, is said to be never so magnificent as "the rough careless strokes of nature." The entire order of nature is embraced with a new enthusiasm.

What has been said of Addison may be repeated with greater emphasis in regard to Shaftesbury who made his own testimony to the "Abyss of Space."[6] The spiritual values are now fully embedded in the natural

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[1] "And how greatly distinguished is the speech of some men of great genius, as Homer, Cicero, Milton, Locke, Addison, and others . . . ." Religious Affections, 299.

[2] "There are none who more gratify and enlarge the imagination than the authors of the new philosophy, whether we consider their theories of the earth or heavens, the discoveries they have made by glasses, or any other of their contemplations on nature." Spectator, Addison, Steele, Parnell . . . and others (Ten Volumes, New York, 1809-10), 420.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid., 565.

[5] Ibid., 412.

[6] "In vain we try to fathom the Abyss of SPACE, the Seat of thy extensive Being; of which no place is empty, no void which is not full." Characteristicks (London, 1711), II. 369.

order "beyond which there is no Measure or Rule of things."[1] Man is made for nature for "if Nature herself be not for Man, but Man for Nature; then must Man, by his good leave, submit to the Elements of Nature, and not the elements to him."[2] The nature which Shaftesbury invokes is not, however, the nature which is a reflection of the symmetry associated with the aesthetics of limitation. It is the nature of "rude Rocks," "irregular unwrought Grottos" and "broken Falls of water."[3] It is such "rude nature," and not the rational beauty of harmonious order, which is regarded as glorious and "sovereignly Good."[4] Holiness had transfered its dwelling place from the limited order of rational beauty to the "ampler scene" of nature.

One cannot but be struck by the fact that Edwards was himself not unmindful of this enlarging vision of beauty. Not only did he declare the apotheosis of space but he also reflected the new interest in the magnificence of nature, an enthusiasm which is evidenced in the "Personal Narrative," Images and Shadows of Divine Things, and in certain of the Miscellanies. There is little question that, like Henry More, Addison, Shaftesbury and many others, Jonathan Edwards developed a taste for nature. It is difficult to determine to what extent Edwards was influenced by the English thinkers. Beyond the principal figures of Newton and Locke, the record is more often tantalizing than conclusive. Henry More offers striking parallels[5] but if he was read by Edwards it is

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[1] Ibid., p. 153. [2] Ibid., p. 302.

[3] Ibid., p. 393. [4] Ibid., p. 302.

[5] Wallace E. Anderson has recently drawn attention to similarities between passages in Edwards and sections of More's Immortality of the Soul. "There are a number of indications that the works of Henry More furnished him with both the basic form and much of the materials of his reasoning." "Immaterialism in Jonathan Edwards' Early Philosophical Notes," Journal of the History of Ideas, XXV, No. 2 (April-June, 1964) p. 184.

noted neither in the "Catalogue" nor in the course of his writing.[1] Edwards' vatious papers do attest acquaintance with the Spectator[2] and Shaftesbury's Characteristicks is listed in the "Catalogue." While this adds up to circumstantial evidence of some weight, it is not necessary to argue that direct influence was exerted upon Edwards by any of these figures. Edwards was familiar with the main current of the new thought through his acquaintance with Newton and Locke. In his various notes he had dismissed "antiquated Ptolemy," professed himself to be a "lover of novelty" and had sought to measure the significance of gravity, motion and light for philosophy and for faith. Furthermore, the "Personal Narrative" and certain of the Miscellanies entries suggest the extent to which Edwards had become attuned to the sensibility associated with the new world of philosophy. Like many another in his time he had developed a taste for nature.

It is in the "Personal Narrative" which has already been noted as the record of Edwards' religious conversion, an experience which led to the acceptance of the dogma of divine sovereignty in all its strictness, that we find also the hints and suggestions of involvement in the

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[1]While More does not appear there are scattered references to other Cambridge Platonists. John Smith's Select Discourses is recorded in the "Catalogue," together with the recommendation that it had the power to raise "one's view above the world." A lengthy citation from the Discourses appears on pages 370-2 of the Religious Affections (Yale edition). Cudworth's True Intellectual System is noted in five separate entries in the "Catalogue" (25j, 26k, l, 33f, 36b) together with reviewer's commendations. From Cudworth is taken the description of Plato's "Subterranean Cave" which appears in entry #40 of "The Mind." Beyond this there seems to be no discernible influence from the direction of Cudworth. More, Smith and Cudworth were all represented in the Dummer collection. Consult the listing of the Dummer collection, "A List of Books Given to the College of Connecticut in New England with the Names of the Benefactors," Papers in Honor of Andrew Keogh (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1938), pp. 423-492.

[2]A reference to the Spectator is contained in "Attempt to Promote Union in Prayer," Works, III. 502.

enchantments of the "space mystique." It is this fact which has led to a comparison between the "Personal Narrative" and passages in Emerson's Nature, Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey and Thoreau's Journals.[1] Edwards' "new sense" of glory was indeed bound up with a piety toward nature not unlike that found among the romantics. There is first of all a remarkable conviction of direct and unmediated experience: "The appearance of every thing was altered; there seemed to be, as it were, a calm, sweet cast, or appearance of divine glory, in almost every thing. God's excellency, his wisdom, his purity and love, seemed to appear in every thing; in the sun, moon, and stars; in the clouds, and blue sky; in the grass, flowers, trees; in the water, and all nature; which used greatly to fix my mind."[2] The emphasis upon visual experience is unmistakable and comes not merely as a metaphor. The divine glory is seen in nature. "I often used to sit and view the moon for continuance; and in the day, spent much time in viewing the clouds, and sky, to behold the sweet glory of God in these things . . . ."[3] As he was later to argue, if there is such a thing as divine glory then it has to be seen.

These are passages which would not have appeared unusual in an Addison or a Shaftesbury but they are rather remarkable in one who was to become the last great defender of the Puritan way. The Liber Creaturarum was, to be sure, a commonplace of Christian thought. As Richardson had it, "the world, and the creatures therein are like a book wherein God's wisdom is written, and there must we seek it out."[4] Calvin had had

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[1] Cf. the notes of Faust and Johnson, Jonathan Edwards: Representative Selections (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962), 420.

[2] "Personal Narrative," Works, I. 60.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Cited by Miller, The New England Mind, I. 289.

much to say about the creation as the "theater of God's glory"[1] and Puritans like Edward Taylor could be extremely attentive to the rhetoric of created things. Yet on the whole the Puritan did not respond deeply to nature. Most would have agreed with Calvin that human sinfulness had obscured the book of creation. "He did not attack the desire for beauty as such," Knappen writes of the Puritan pastor, "but in his diary he never mentioned an attractive landscape or sunset."[2] The "Narrative" offers, therefore, a sense of glory which is quite unique within the tradition. If for Calvin the frame of the universe was to be a school for piety,[3] that lesson was now being studied with a directness of apprehension which was quite singular. It was as if the veil of sin had fallen away.

Not only does the "new sense" of glory involve a note of extraordinary immediacy; it also bespeaks a certain enlargement of the imagination, an invoking of new experience. As the nature enthusiastists discovered a new significance in "rude nature," so Edwards' "calm, sweet abstraction of soul" emerges against a background of "mountains or some solitary wilderness."[4] The "horrid wilderness" was meaningful to Shaftesbury in a manner which would have been foreign to the past. Mountains and wilderness had more often been taken as allegories of human pridefulness or sin, rather than as the privileged places of divine disclosure.[5] But now the irregular, the unlimited, even the foreboding could become vehicles for the sacred. "Western Europe, beginning with the English

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[1]Calvin, I. v. 8.

[2]Knappen, p. 436.

[3]Ibid. II. vi. 1.

[4]"Personal Narrative," Works, I. 61.

[5]Nicolson, From Mountain Gloom . . . ., p. 43-44.

thinkers, found a moral and spiritual use for mountains, waste places, and storms."[1] The effect was that of overriding previous limitations as to the appropriate boundaries of experience. It is therefore of particular interest that Edwards voices a similar appreciation of new dimensions of experience. Not only does he associate his new sense of glory with mountains and wilderness, but he also finds the violence of the storm to be a thing of beauty: "scarce any thing, among all the works of nature was so sweet to me as thunder and lightning; formerly, nothing had been so terrible to me."[2] Edwards tells us that he would station himself during a storm to watch the play of lightning and hear the voice of the thunder, all of which he found "exceedingly entertaining, leading me to sweet contemplations of my great and glorious God.[3] The "new sense" of glory belongs to this larger range of experience. It belonged to wilderness and waste places and not simply to the well-ordered garden of Puritanism.

Finally, attention may be called to what might be termed the discovery of the heart on the part of Edwards. With the "new sense" of glory the dogma of divine sovereignty became not merely a conviction but a "delightful" conviction. "An inward, sweet sense of these things, at times, came into my heart; and my soul was led away in pleasant views and contemplations of them."[4] Edwards found himself often "carried away" by his sense of divine things. "The sense I had of divine things, would often of a sudden kindle up, as it were, a sweet burning in my heart; an

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[1] Tuveson, p. 68.

[2] "Personal Narrative," Works I. 62.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Ibid.

ardor of soul, that I know not how to express."[1] He goes on to speak of a mingling of feelings, a "sweet conjunction" of "majesty and meekness joined together." "It was a sweet, and gentle, and holy majesty; and also a majestic meekness; an awful sweetness; a high, and great, and holy gentleness."[2] It was a mixture of feelings not unlike those recorded by Professor Nicolson in her discussion of the space mystique. When the English traveler John Dennis crossed the Alps in 1688, he found himself disturbed by the paradoxical feelings prompted by the heights. "The sense of all this produc'd different motions in me, viz. a delightful Horrour, a terrible Joy, and at the same time, that I was infinitedly pleas'd, I trembled."[3] As Professor Nicolson comments, those who knew this discomforting proximity of divine things "discovered in their souls potentialities and capacities they had not recognized."[4] It amounted to a new discovery of the self in its solitary joy as the soul was "led away in pleasant views and contemplations."

> I spent most of my time in thinking of divine things . . . often walking alone in the woods, and solitary places, for meditation, soliloquy, and prayer . . . . The delights which I now felt in the things of religion, were of an exceeding different kind from those before mentioned, that I had when a boy; and what I then had no more notion of, than one born blind has of pleasant and beautiful colors. They were of a more inward, pure, soul animating and refreshing nature. Those former delights never reached the heart; and did not arise from any sight of the divine excellency of the things of God . . . .[5]

These were strange experiences for the young Edwards. He could

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Ibid.

[3] From Mountain Gloom . . . ., p. 277.

[4] Ibid., p. 273.

[5] "Personal Narrative," Works I.

not but wonder if there were anything of a "saving nature" in them.[1] Yet they were also strangely compelling. As he wrote in his initial entry to the Miscellanies, "We drink in strange notions of holiness from our childhood as if it were a melancholy . . . and unpleasant thing, but there is nothing in it but what is sweet and ravishingly lovely."[2]

The parallel between Edwards' experience and that of the nature enthusiasts can be overstressed. The mark of his deeply orthodox character is upon every page of the "Personal Narrative." And yet edging through these pages are intimations of another spirit. Indeed the rapprochment between God and nature, the enlargement of the imagination and the awareness of the solitary self--all notable traits of the nature enthusiasts--are the very marks of the "new sense" of glory which is given expression in the "Personal Narrative." These characteristics were often obscured by the overwhelming emphasis upon the divine justice which became Edwards' chief stock-in-trade during the Northampton years. They were never entirely lost, however. Together they suggest the dimensions of another form of piety, a piety other than that which informed the earlier vision of the Puritan commonwealth.

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Miscellanies, "a."

CHAPTER IX

THE UNSEARCHABLE HEART

Years before the formative experiences recounted in the "Personal Narrative" Edwards was already aware of the weight to be attached to direct, immediate experience. He had offered his study of the flying spider as "a plain fact, which my own eyes have witnessed" and added that those who took the pains to observe would also find that their "eyes . . . will make them sure of it."[1] This was a conviction that was never forsaken, even after he had transfered his attention from tangible spiders to the rather less tangible matters of divine things. As he later told his congregation in Northampton, if there was such a thing as the divine, then "it is rational to suppose that there may be such a thing as seeing it."[2] Edwards had come to share one of the major preoccupations of his age. Everywhere men found themselves impressed by the importance of visual experience and spatial representation. The new science with its microscopes and telescopes and its interest in the natural world had focused attention on the central importance of visual experience. References to optical instruments or "glasses" abound in the literature of the time. Culverwell, for example, thought of philosophy as a matter of "Intellectual Opticks"[3] and Addison referred to sight as "the most perfect

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[1] "Of Insects," Works, I, 23.

[2] Sermon: Matthew 16:17, Works, VI. 184.

[3] Nathanael Culverwel, Of the Light of Nature, ed. John Brown (Edinburgh, 1895), p. 216.

and most delightful of all our senses."[1] In the post-Newtonian world, as Perry Miller has said, to see was the highest form of communication.[2] Edwards agreed. God's creatures, he thought, "are made to be the eye of the creation" beholding the glory of the creator in it.[3]

Edwards was, in part, echoing the old longing for spiritual illumination. Puritans before him had turned to scripture and there read the admonition to "taste and see." The Cambridge Platonists had made much of the "candle of the Lord" which was to be found in man as the source of divine illumination. But, more than this, he is reflecting the new world of philosophy with its interest in direct, visual perception. Repeatedly he stressed to his people that they must come to see things "as they are."[4] In the sermon on "Divine Light" he spoke of an excellence so manifest "that this conviction of their truth is an effect and natural consequence of this sight of their divine glory."[5] Locke had played so important a role for it was he who provided a new model of man fit for this new world of philosophy. In explaining that the understanding works solely with the ideas given in perception plus its reflections upon those ideas, Locke was reaffirming Edwards' confidence in the truth which he had discovered with his "own eyes." One encountered the world and found the truth given in it as Newton had examined the spectrum of light and determined the character of the refracted rays. One looked at nature; he did not ascend beyond it. To Edwards it seemed that the apprehension of

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[1] Spectator, 411.

[2] "Introduction," Images and Shadows . . . ., p. 33.

[3] "The Mind," #27, p. 62.

[4] Sermon: Romans 2:10, Works, VIII. 233.

[5] Sermon: Matthew 16:17, Works, VI. 176.

truth was "an effect and natural consequence" of perception. One's eyes will make him sure of it.

The sense of direct negotiation between man and the realm of truth was carried into the work of Northampton by Edwards. It was displayed in the Boston lecture, "God Glorified in Man's Dependence," with its insistence upon the absolute and immediate relation of God to man. As such doctrines as that of "secondary-causes" had been outmoded by the new science and its principle of uniformity, so Edwards removed the doctrine of means and the federal covenant from his theological scheme. No mutual covenant would bind God. He was first and last, all and everything. Edwards was convinced that man stood directly related to divine things.

The perceptualism which was a part of this sense of immediacy found employment in the rhetoric of the revival. Taking to heart the lesson of John Locke in regard to the dependence of the mind upon ideas given in perception, Edwards proceeded to invest the ideas communicated in preaching with an awful urgency. By representing to men their destiny in compelling imagery he would convince them of their predicament. By showing his congregation "things as they are," that is, by depicting to them the greatness of the divine wrath and the insecurity of their own circumstances, he would frighten them into repentence. The imagery of "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God" was not invoked for the sake of illustration or metaphor. Edwards was convinced that it was a representation of the truth, the truth that men were destined to be accepted or rejected. It seemed to the Northampton preacher that the universal system of existence which he found in Newton's immutable laws was identical with the providential order affirmed by Christian faith. The divine justice was as unyielding as nature's laws and equally ruthless. Some

would consent to this justice, some would fail to rejoice in it. Some would see the beauty and be saved; some would fail to see and be outcast. On this basis Edwards had sought to preserve the basic terms of the doctrine of election within the framework of the new world of philosophy. It formed the background of his attempt to restore the vitality of the Holy Commonwealth.

Yet the appeal to direct experience of divine things did much to undermine the very Puritan faith which Edwards endeavored to uphold. The appeal to a direct apprehension of divine glory, one which "convinces the mind of the divinity of these things, as this glory is in itself a direct, clear, and all-conquering evidence of it,"[1] was to undercut the Puritan enterprise, or what remained of it. Puritans had also affirmed the direct intervention of God in the life of the believer. But this conviction had been limited by its relationship to the ideal of the Holy Commonwealth. The direct apprehension of divine things means that nothing can stand between man and the divine. Either a man perceives and is saved, or he does not and is lost. The two terms of importance are the divine order and the individual heart. The only society that matters is the society of being. As Loren Baritz has said in comment upon the Treatise Concerning Religious Affections, "Religion has to do with God and man--no intermediaries, no formalism, no extenuations."[2]

In declaring this direct, unmediated relationship between man and God, Edwards was, in fact, destroying the very fabric of relationships which had made for an elect community "well-knit" together. Edwards was

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[1] Religious Affections, p. 298.

[2] City Upon a Hill (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1964), p. 69.

not aware of this for he was reaffirming all the while that vision of solidarity which he found in the universe. Edwards was convinced that in his direct dependence upon the divine constitution man was bound to a pattern of coherence. It was a universal system, in which each event seemed to have its place in terms of the orderly design of the whole concourse of things. The works of God, he thought, "are not so many distinct independent works; but rather so many different parts of one work, one regular scheme. They are all united, just as the several parts of one building: there are many stones, many pieces of timber, but all are so joined, and fitly formed together, that they make but one building; they have all but one foundation, and are united at last in one top-stone."[1] It was a vision of perfection, hallowed to the Western imagination by long centuries, and indelibly set in Edwards' mind. Yet, as he was to discover, it was a vision that would not fit the conditions of Northampton. The many timbers and stones were recalcitrant and could not be fitly joined into so regular and rational a structure. In this respect the revival was itself the best witness to the fact that the piety which Edwards sponsored was no longer identical with that of old Puritanism in New England.

For Edwards the revival carried a fundamental significance which he could not reject. "For him the Great Awakening was a large and timely laboratory of experience, experience that could not be ignored, controverted, or denied. A great deal had happened; lives had been changed . . . . Whatever had been the extravagances . . . there was a residual good--the revival of the unconcerned and the conversion of the unredeemed--that

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[1]"The History of the Work of Redemption," Works, III. 429.

Edwards could not betray and would not disavow."[1] The fact remained that he was hard pressed to answer for the extravagance of the revival. However much he protested that God's order was sure and certain, the factor of individualism had come to loom large in the affairs of the revival. Edwards was clearly prepared to accept much in the way of disorder so long as he was convinced that it was a work of God. In 1741 he was arguing that unusual behavior was only to be expected of so extraordinary an event.[2] Irregular conduct ought not to be the ground of judging divine things. "A thousand imprudences will not prove a work to be not of the Spirit of God . . . ."[3] His argument was often of a negative sort. It was true, for example, that the physical, vocal, and imaginative signs were not demanded by scripture, but then, of course, neither were they denied. A year later he was forced to admit that the chaos was indeed great. He found that "a great deal of noise and tumult, confusion and uproar, darkness mixed with light, and evil with good is always to be expected in the beginning of something very glorious . . . ."[4] But in a single sentence he indicates the extent to which the Puritan ideal of the well-ordered society has been surrendered. The work of the Spirit is not to increase natural capacities, he avers, "nor has God obliged himself immediately to increase civil prudence in proportion to the degrees of spiritual light."[5] The Awakening had clearly broken the old pattern of

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[1] Gaustad, p. 97.

[2] "Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God," Works, III. 561-562.

[3] Ibid., p. 571.

[4] "Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England," Works, IV. 98.

[5] Ibid., p. 103.

limitation which had characterized the ideal of the Holy Commonwealth.

Edwards, of course, had not forsaken the goal of "excellent order" in the church society but he found himself caught up in events which he could neither control nor entirely fathom. In 1741 he confessed: "I once did not imagine that the heart of man had been so unsearchable as it is."[1] In 1743 he was writing to his Scottish correspondent, M'Culloch, lamenting the instability of the revival: "We have run from one extreme to another, with respect to talking of experiences . . . declaring almost everything that passes between God and their own souls, everywhere, and before every body."[2] It was not the regular, beautiful church society that had been envisioned. Before the year was out he acknowledged the situation in Northampton to be "very extraordinary." There were trances, ecstasies, emotions gone awry. "Satan took the advantage," he declared, "and a great deal of caution and pains were found necessary, to keep the people, many of them, from running wild."[3] It was such activity that helped to seal the fate of Winthrop's holy city.

The devil was to be blamed for this, Edwards felt, but the demon was more a product of his own mind than he perhaps imagined. While he clung to his vision of perfection, there was also something in his thoughts which worked against that notion of rational beauty. The very strength of his insistence upon the immediacy of divine things tended to undermine those intermediate orders of being which had formerly supported the idea of rational order. So urgently had he invoked the unyielding beauty of divine justice that the outcome had been not the exemplary church order

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[1] "Distinguishing Marks," Works, III. 609.

[2] Cited by Dwight, Works, I. 197.

[3] Ibid., p. 165.

of the saints but rather the church's disorder. In a manner which Edwards could not entirely understand he had taken his people to a new way of thinking. His vision led less to the order of rational beauty than to another order, less regular, less complete. Instead of leading men to the "City upon a hill," he had taken them to the wilderness.

This is not entirely surprising. There was, with all of the emphasis on cosmic solidarity, something atomistic about Edwards' vision. The stress upon the extraordinary immediacy of divine things had combined with Edwards' reconstructed metaphysics to produce what might be termed an atomistic view of man and the world. The declaration of the direct dependence of each event upon the divine constitution without benefit of intermediaries, in effect, dissolved the sense of connectedness between things, thus introducing an element of contingency. For older Puritanism, to be sure, God could intervene in the ordinary day-to-day pattern of things (secondary causes) for some great work but ordinarily that pattern will hold good. For Edwards such ordinary and reasonable expectations have been called into question. There is nothing, for instance, about the furniture in another room that can lead us to expect a continuity or coherence in our experience. The only guarantee of the identity of the person, the continuity of our environment, or the very perseverance in being of the atom is the ultimate divine constitution. This embodied a strong sense of rational order but also a certain diabolical element. The only foundation of order lay in the whole; the individual event, however, was less definitely connected with its own history. It no longer had a status of its own. The furniture can reasonably be expected to be found in a room after one has been absent, not because of any continuity in the furniture in itself, but only because the whole scheme of things would be out of joint were it to vanish from existence.

This picture of discreet, essentially discontinuous events, held together by a larger constitution becomes especially clear in the discussion of the arbitrary character of the divine constitution in the essay on original sin. Because that constitution is an arbitrary one, argues Edwards, physical law is equally arbitrary. Because the law of gravity is observed to operate at one moment, it does not mean that it will be so in the next moment.[1] Because all things are in flux there is no continuity in things themselves. The present existence of any substance cannot be considered an effect of its past existence. "The existence (so to speak) of an effect . . . though ever so near one to another do not at all co-exist one with the other; and therefore are as truly different effects, as if those parts of space and duration were ever so far asunder."[2] It is not for nothing that Edwards has been called an American Hume. He continues:

> And the prior existence can no more be the proper cause of the new existence, in the next moment, or the next part of space, than if it had been in an age before, or at a thousand miles distance, without any existence to fill up the intermediate time or space. Therefore the existence of created substances, in each successive moment, must be the effect of the immediate agency, will and power of GOD.[3]

The last sentence is, of course, the whole burden of Edwards' argument. It is God upon whom we are immediately dependent for all and for everything. This was the great burden of "God Glorified . . ." What he is saying in the process, however, is that, except for the divine concourse, "there is no such thing as any identity or oneness in created objects."[4] There is a disconnectedness between events themselves: "The image that exists this moment, is not at all <u>derived</u> from the image which existed the last preceding moment . . . ."[5] The distance between one event and another is understood to be as great "as if those parts of space and

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[1] "Original Sin," <u>Works</u>, II. 556. [2] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 552.
[3] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 552. [4] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 556. [5] <u>Ibid</u>., p. 555

duration were ever so far asunder." While the unity and coherence of the whole is affirmed, the unity of events on the smaller scale is being denied.

Something of this same atomism finds its way into the dissertation on Freedom of the Will with its lengthy argument in defense of the dogma of divine determination. Here Edwards had argued that man is a creature of propensities, always inclining in affirmation or disagreement and never in a position to suspend judgment. He is always determined by that complex of circumstances, within and without, which comprise the motives according to which he inclines and hence determines his willful activity. The moral self is not suspended in ever renewed moments of contingency but is ever involved in inclinations and actions which are grounded in dispositions of the self. Man is a creature of propensities; he behaves like the die often thrown and habitually landing in the same way.[1] Edwards was seeking to locate in the creature a necessity that was not unlike that of the universe as a whole. He sought to link man to the divine constitution. The physical order had proven itself so amenable to reason; could man, the rational animal, be any less so? If the stars in their courses obey an omnipotent reason and every gross weight falls to the ground according to a mathematically precise rule, how, then, could the human heart be regarded as an aimless wanderer? Edwards' vision would brook no contingency. Yet, having argued for the determination of the willful activity, Edwards does little to link the self to the larger pattern of divine determination. Beside the principle of sufficient reason, only a web of scriptural references holds the individual act to the terms of the divine constitution.

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[1] Ibid., p. 321.

The Edwardsean metaphysic with its emphasis upon the direct relationship between the individual and the whole concourse of events, in effect, undermined the sense of a firmly fixed place belonging to a man. Precisely because the path of the atom is determined by the whole, it was less determined by the particular configuration of which it was a part. The disappearance of furniture from a room when no one was there to perceive it was ruled impossible not because of the status of the furniture itself or its relationship to those who had previously observed it but because its disappearance would disturb the divine concourse. Thus, events tend to be uprooted from their immediate patterns of coherence and placed in a wider context, a context which was rational and whole but which provided a less certain definition for particular events. In the defense of the greater unity of all things the status of the particular had become less certain. The vision of metaphysical solidarity did less to support a rigid and circumscribed notion of the place of the particular. One cannot but sense the solitude of the "least blade of grass."

But this atomizing was not confined merely to works of a more speculative character. It was also reflected in the preaching of the Great Awakening where it served to heighten the awareness of insecurity on the part of the individual believer. So it was in the famous utterance at Enfield in which it was declared that "there are no means within reach that can be of any security . . . . In short, they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of; all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance of an incensed God."[1] Thus, the spider hanging by a thread over the flames of wrath

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[1]"Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God," Works, VII, 168.

was indeed a truthful image of man's condition as an atom suspended within the greatness of the divine constitution, possessing no place of his own. It was perhaps all the more truthful because Edwards was speaking to men who had been to some degree uprooted by the movement from the old world to the new and who found themselves living on or near the edge of the wilderness. Merrill Gaddis has found the frontier situation to be productive of a "religious atomism"[1] and certainly the exposure of the New England frontier helped to accent the feeling of vulnerability. The atomism of Edwards' metaphysical scheme and the insecurity evoked by the remarkable configuration of images in the Enfield and similar sermons may have confirmed the moral experience of the people who responded in such surprising manner to Edwards' preaching. Again, it is the Awakening itself which is best witness to the distance which Edwards has moved from the covenanted piety of Puritanism. More than ever the individual was coming to discover his isolation.

Edwards was aware of the role of insecurity in the revival and felt that it was his task to keep the anxiety alive by beating men off from every security. He was also convinced that emotional expression given to the experience of man's isolation before God was not in itself wrong. The affections, after all, were the very springs of life. "Take away all love and hatred, all hope and fear, all anger, zeal and affectionate desire, and the world would be, in a great measure, motionless and dead . . . ."[2] In the weeping and groaning, the shouting and laughing, the despair and rejoicing, there had been extravagance; Satan had

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[1]Merrill E. Gaddis, "Religious Ideas and Attitudes on the Early Frontier," Church History II (September, 1935), 160.

[2]Religious Affections, p. 101.

taken the advantage; but Edwards had been deeply moved by the sight of Northampton in those days and he was not going to write off the Awakening. Still he was not prepared to accept the consequences of so much disorder. He still envisioned the church as a society of "excellent order." Edwards was committed to the conviction that a correspondence ought to obtain between the individual event and the cosmic order. It was in the Treatise Concerning the Religious Affections that Edwards took up the task of reconciling the zeal of the revival with the divine order of truth. The inner life would not be allowed to wander. "Reasonable affections" would not rend the public order of truth. Yet it is impossible, for all his artistry, to conceal the fact that the appeal to the heart and the affections has driven a wedge between the self and its immediate world.

Edwards was not given to the disparagement of reason and the Religious Affections had been an attempt to reconcile the reason with the life of the affections. But at the same time Edwards was also cognizant of another distinction which he could not forsake. It was the discontinuity between nature and grace, the natural and the supernatural. The distinction remained essential because Edwards recognized, as countless Puritans had before him, that man must become a new creature. As he explained in the essay on "Original Sin," "supernatural" serves to distinguish between "what belongs to or flows from, that nature which man has, merely as man, and those things . . . by which one is denominated, not only a man but a truly virtuous, holy, and spiritual man . . . ."[1] This had been one of the unhappy lessons of the Awakening, from Edwards' point of view. The rise and fall of the revival had been for the most part

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[1]"Original Sin," Works II. 536.

merely an expansion of the natural tendancies of the creature and not the manifestation of genuine holy love. Men had been greatly excited; they had not been fundamentally changed. "When a natural man denies his lust, and lives a strict, religious life . . . 'Tis not natural, 'Tis all a force against nature; as when a stone is violently thrown upwards; but that force will be gradually spent; yet nature will remain in its full strength, and so prevails again, and the stone returns downward."[1] In the face of the inadequacy of natural principles Edwards invokes "a new supernatural principle" in the light of which men will walk with constancy and in newness of life.[2]

In the Religious Affections this supernatural principle is vested in the "new inward perception or sensation" of the mind.[3] Edwards suggests that this divine sense operates after the manner of other natural principles. "All spiritual and gracious affections are attended with, and so arise from some apprehension, idea or sensation of the mind."[4] But if the new inward perception involves apprehension it is not ordinary apprehension. It is not simply cognizance of the world but joyful recognition of the world as the theater of divine glory. What the "new inward perception" involves is an adequate spiritual understanding, "a sense of the heart, of the supreme beauty and sweetness of the holiness or moral perfection of divine things, together with all that discerning and knowledge of things of religion, that depends upon, and flows from such a sense."[5] It is not merely seeing but a sense of the heart. This principle is radically new for there is "no improvement of those qualifications or

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[1] Religious Affections, p. 396. [2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 205. [4] Ibid., p. 207-208.

[5] Ibid., p. 272.

principles that are natural . . . or exalting them to higher degrees . . . ."[1] Thus the new perception cannot be arrived at by any compounding of previous perceptions. On the one hand, these things "are caused to exist in the soul habitually, and according to such a stated constitution . . . as is called a principle of nature;" on the other hand, "those things are wrought in the soul that are above nature . . . ."[2] By locating the supernatural principle in a new perception it seemed possible to maintain the uniqueness of the "new sense" of glory which was to him a manifestation of grace, without subverting the established sequence of events which was the immutable working of natural law.

Unfortunately, the delineation of the "new inward perception" as a supernatural principle seemed to be simply another way of saying that the reasons of the heart were not the same as the common order of truth. Edwards is, in fact, developing a distinction quite similar to that put forward by Coleridge between reason and understanding. In the sermon on "Divine Light" Edwards had gone so far as to maintain that grace is clear out of reason's province:

> But if we take <u>reason</u> strictly--not for the faculty of mental perception in general, but for ratiocination, or a power of inferring by arguments--the perceiving of spiritual beauty and excellency no more belongs to reason than it belongs to the sense of feeling to perceive colours . . . . It is out of reason's province to perceive the beauty or lovliness of any thing: such a perception does not belong to that faculty. Reason's work is to perceive truth and not excellency.[3]

The perceiving of spiritual beauty is privileged and it is essentially private. "Reason may determine that a countenance is beautiful to others, it may determine that honey is sweet to others; but it will never give me

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[1] <u>Ibid.</u>, p. 205.

[2] Sermon: Matthew 16:17, <u>Works</u> VI. 174.

[3] <u>Ibid.</u>, pp. 185-186.

a perception of its sweetness."[1] The "new inward perception" which in Religious Affections is denominated "supernatural" carries on the same basic distinction. It was the "divine supernatural sense and relish of the heart"[2] which distinguished the spiritual man from ordinary man. The former is the one who tastes and relishes the sweetness of divine things, the latter is he who knows only at second hand. He may reason and infer; he does not possess the privileged felicity of the heart.

By transfering the dichotomy between nature and grace to the realm of an inward perception Edwards was in fact asserting the absolute uniqueness of that inward perception. In the light of this emphasis it would be difficult to retain the balance between the private and the public orders which Puritanism had so carefully nurtured. The tension between nature and grace was being turned into a tension between the ordinary knowledge of the public order and the private apprehensions of the heart. The divine sense of the saint was something other than the common knowledge shared by all men. This much had, of course, always been acknowledged, but now Edwards had drawn that line between ordinary perceptions and that unique perception which is of the order of the heart. With all of Edwards' desire to assert that affections must be reasonable and that a correspondence holds between the inner and the outer worlds,[3]

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[1] Ibid.

[2] Religious Affections, p. 297.

[3] "If this divine sense were a thing arbitrarily given, without any foundation in the nature of things, it would not properly be called by such names [i.e. "light," "knowledge," etc.] For if there were no correspondence or agreement in such a sense with the nature of things, any more than there would have been in a contrary sense, the idea we obtain by this spiritual sense could in no respect be said to be a knowledge or perception of anything besides what was in our own minds. For this idea would be no representation of anything without." "The Nature of True Virtue," Works, II. 154.

it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the emphasis upon the privileged nature of the new inward perception in fact drives a wedge between the private and the public realm. The reasons of the heart, Edwards is saying, are not identical with the common order of reason. The latter will never yield the sweetness, the delight which comes with the divine sense. The distinguishing of a peculiar divine sense is tacit recognition that the "reasons of the heart" stood outside the public order of truth. The private good and the public good would therefore no longer neatly correspond as Edwards believed they would. Edwards' confidence in the correspondence between microcosm and macrocosm was clearly excessive in view of his emphasis upon the will, the affections and the heart. As he had already had occasion to observe, the heart was more uncertain and unsearchable than he had imagined.

The work on Religious Affections, like the rhetoric of the revival, is in reality responding to a new understanding of man, an understanding determined by a new set of defining circumstances. The very language of perception points to a gap which has begun to open between the private and the public order. To be one who sees is to be both something more and perhaps something less than one who reflects the world as the microcosm repeats the macrocosm. To understand man as a creature of perception is to suggest that a certain distance has come between the individual and the public order. As in Locke's significant simile, the mind is like a closet with only small windows leading to the world beyond. Addison, who lauded sight as the most perfect of the senses, could observe in almost the same breath that as a creature of perception man was like one in "a dungeon."[1] Addison was little concerned by this thought; he even found

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[1] Spectator, 411.

it entertaining. It does suggest, however, the sense of the isolation of the individual which came with the understanding of man as one who encounters his world primarily through perception. Edwards did not pretend to be interested in solitary imaginings as was Addison. Nonetheless, the invoking of the privileged "new inward perception" and the appeal to the affections of the heart suggests how close he had come to the picture of man which had been sketched by Addison and other men of the new age. It was a picture which took account of the fact that the older patterns of coherence and meaning had been largely broken and that the individual was less closely determined by the traditional frameworks which had defined both his status and the meaning of the world. The individual has become more solitary, more aware of himself, more cognizant of the uncanny movements of the heart.

Jonathan Edwards' description of the man of affections with his direct, unmediated perception of divine things is the description of man appropriate to the "new sense" of glory. It is the man who has found himself in the solitude of the wilderness and there discovered the remarkable glory of divine things. In his own peculiar manner Edwards had experienced the situation of man in this new world where traditional frameworks of meaning counted for less than the direct negotiation of man with the vast new world. In his own manner Edwards was setting the scene, in theological terms, for the later American drama which de Tocqueville described as that of "man himself . . . standing in the presence of Nature and of God."[1] There was an insecurity in this picture of man. Other enthusiasts for the new world of sensibility occasionally felt a shudder, a sense of lostness, 'though they did not, like Edwards, fan it

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[1] Democracy in America, II. 81.

into a devil's flame. Even Addison was uneasy and paused to note the horror implicit in this vast new universe: "I was afraid of being overlooked amidst the immensity of nature, and lost among that infinite variety of creatures, which in all probability swarm through all these immeasurable regions of matter."[1] The bonds which had formerly provided a sense of security had been broken. The individual felt his solitude, and Addison could think that he was "a being that was not worth the smallest regard . . . ."[2] This sense of alarm was one side of the new position of man and Edwards made the most of it in order to frighten men to salvation. But it was only one side, the other was the remarkable elation and joy which countless men had come to experience in the tumult of the Great Awakening. Within the precincts of their own experience men and women had come to discover unimagined possibilities. It had seemed to many, Sarah Edwards among them, that God "was going to set up a Reign of Love on the earth, and that heaven and earth were, as it were coming together . . . ."[3] Sarah was so moved with ecstasy that she could not forebear to leap with joy. With allowances for the difference in circumstances, it was an experience not unrelated to that of the nature enthusiasts. They too had been convinced that heaven and earth were coming together. For both, the restraints upon emotion were broken and the depths of the heart plumbed through experiences prompted by the conviction that divine things were immediately at hand. Both discovered in their souls, as Professor Nicolson observed in regard to the nature enthusiasts, "potentialities and capacities they had not recognized."[4]

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[1] Spectator, 565.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Works, I. 181.

[4] From Mountain Gloom . . . , p. 273.

This had been Edwards' own experience as the testimony of the "Personal Narrative" suggests. It was the form of piety which he nurtured in his own heart as he came to Northampton. When the Great Awakening erupted Edwards greeted its enthusiasm with approbation and with only a minimum of criticism. It was a form of piety which pointed more towards later romanticism than it did toward the old piety of the Holy Commonwealth.[1] Edwards could not abide all the consequences of the revival and he earnestly desired that the society of saints might come to exhibit that beauty which seemed to be proper to divine things. The ill-fated attempt to return to the strict terms of the earlier New England church-covenant way was, in all probability, an effort to bring some greater measure of regularity to the church society. But Edwards' arguments for the restricted covenant did not seem to leave any deep impression upon those who had responded so warmly in earlier years to his preaching. What they seemed to have heard was evidently less the call to the beautiful society of the church than the appeal of the awakened heart. In this reluctance to return to the closed church society with its implication of the primacy of the community over the individual, the people may have understood the meaning of the new piety more clearly than Edwards who sponsored it. In an early sermon Edwards had urged his people to strive diligently in pursuit of the spiritual life and suggested the reason they should do so: "In this way persons gain much more knowledge of themselves, and acquaintance with their own hearts . . . for they have a great deal

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[1]Ralph Gabriel has observed that evangelical revivalism in the 19th century was "a bizarre, but nonetheless genuine, expression of the spirit of romanticism." The extravagance, enthusiasm and individualism all stamped it as a folk romanticism. "Evangelical Religion and Romanticism," Church History, XIX (1950), 39.

more experience of themselves. It is experience of ourselves, and finding what we are, that God commonly makes use of as the means of bringing us off from all dependence on ourselves."[1] Edwards did not see that the means would have a way of becoming the end, nor did he understand how much of a part he had had in prompting that reversal. When Francis Higgenson had endeavored in his farewell sermon to impress upon his people the imperative necessity of establishing the purified church in the new world, he fastened upon the text of Matthew 11:7 to drive his point home.[2] "What went ye out into the wilderness to see," he inquired of the people. When Jonathan Edwards came to give answer to that question a century later, he seemed, in effect, to reply: "experience of ourselves, and finding what we are . . . ."

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[1]Sermon: Luke 16:16, Works, V. 463. Italics mine.

[2]Cited by Mather, II. 363.

CHAPTER X

ENLARGEMENT

If Addison had found reason to feel some alarm because of his solitude in the vast universe, he found far more reason to celebrate the enlargement of vision which accompanied the discovery of this universe. If old bonds were broken and the individual set adrift, it was less evident to many that he was lost than that he was free. This was the other, and for Addison, the more obvious and important side of the coin. It was also, 'though in less obvious manner, the obverse of the coin for Edwards. Although often recessive and obscured by the immense emphasis upon the consequences of divine justice, Edwards' enthusiasm for the new dimensions of the universe was never lost. Even the defense of the doctrine of original sin, as Lewis notes, seems to share this preoccupation with the increasing reach of man's vision. "As he defends it," writes Lewis, ". . . he gives us less the impression of gloomy satisfaction in reducing a tentative sprightliness to renewed despair than of a bold extension of vision . . . ."[1] This "bold extension of vision" is, in addition, a primary trait of Edwards' "new sense" of glory. If, on the one hand, he sometimes stressed the insecurity or solitude of the individual, on the other, he invited men to venture beyond their "private" loyalties to that larger realm in which the least atom was found to belong to nothing less than the whole society of being. It was a vision which,

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[1] Lewis, p. 64.

like the stress upon the heart, proved to be less than compatible with the closed society of saints which he also advocated.

Returning to the "Personal Narrative" it will be recalled that Edwards' own religious experience had manifested a new attitude toward aspects of the world which had previously held little interest or even some foreboding for men. The circumference of experience seemed to expand as he found the delight of divine things in "all nature." Mountains and waste places had appeared with a new sacral significance. The violence of the storm captivated his imagination and the spacious views of the heavens came to fill him with strange stirrings of holiness. Like the nature enthusiasts, Edwards had come to have a feeling for the sublime. As he wrote in the Miscellanies, "The greatness, distance and motion of this great universe has almost omnipotent power upon the imagination. The blood will even be chill'd with the vast idea."[1] He had found God in the rude as well as the regular, in waste places and storm. This stir of the imagination before the vast, the heavens, the mountain, the wilderness, was one of the characteristic marks of the "space-mystique" and it came to shape Edwards' own apprehension of divine glory. At the center of his own experience, even as it was recalled in later years, were suggestions of a beauty other than that rational beauty which had been certified to Edwards by his tradition.

One senses the tension which exists in the "Narrative" between the traditional dogma of divine sovereignty which taught Edwards that God saves and damns and that other sovereignty, the omnipresence of the divine in "all nature." It is a tension which occurs again in a document such as Images and Shadows of Divine Things. The manuscript contains some

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[1] Miscellanies, 42.

two-hundred odd entries in which Edwards seeks to work out the grammar of spiritual truth as it is manifest in the constitution of the world. Entry 28, for example, reads: "As the thunder and thunder clouds, as they are vulgarly called, have a shadow of the majesty of God, so the blue skie, the green fields, and trees, and pleasant flowers have a shadow of the mild attributes of God, viz. grace and love of God, as well as the beauteous rainbow."[1] One finds here the attempt to marry the old world of spiritual meaning to the new discovery of nature. Behind the effort lies the conviction that natural phenomena can be seen not simply as illustrations or "emblems" of divine things but as "evidences of the truth."[2] The whole world of concepts which had gathered themselves about the old story of the spiritual life--the fall of man, the need of redemption--were now to be rediscovered in the natural world. "The exceeding terribleness of the lion, tyger . . . and some other beasts teaches the infinite horror and amazement of those that fall prey to the Devil."[3] The sun is an image of Christ, the winter of the earth's destruction. God's providential order "is like a wheel, or a machine composed of wheels, having wheels in the midst of wheels, that it is so ordered, in the constitution of nature in the dispositions of God's providence, that almost all the curious machines that men contrive, to do any notable things . . . are by wheels . . . revolving round and round . . . representing the manner of the progress of things in divine providence."[4] The lessons of the Puritan

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[1] Images and Shadows of Divine Things, p. 49.

[2] Ibid., p. 134.

[3] Ibid., p. 98.

[4] Ibid., pp. 85-86.

spiritual life were being read anew. The "wheel" of divine providence was sure and perfect in its execution. Not only was this an item of belief for Edwards, he also thought that he had "evidence" of it in the creation. The entries seemed, for the most part, dogmatic; at times they border on the absurd. There is an obvious difficulty inherent in the attempt to discover the old lessons of the spiritual life and the providential order of God in the movements of nature as Edwards would like to do.

Yet there is another sort of lesson to be read in Images and Shadows . . . If it represents an attempt to bring together the new world of nature with the old spiritual scheme, it also breathes another spirit. From time to time, one finds suggestions of the fascination exercised by the boundless views of nature. There are images of the "purity of the blessedness of the heavenly inhabitants" in "the purity, beauty, sublimity, and glory of the visible heavens as one views it in a calm and temperate air, when one is made more sensible of the height of them and of the beauty of their colour, when there are here and there interposed little clouds . . . ."[1] Hills and mountains may be "types of heaven"[2] as Edwards maintains but the mountains, hills and heavens seem to be making a claim of their own upon his imagination. In the last entry in the collection he breaks into an outpouring of praise for majesty displayed in the magnificence of the creation:

> The immense magnificence of the visible world in inconceivable vastness, the incomprehensible height of the heavens, etc., is but a type of the infinite magnificence, height, and glory of God's work in the spiritual world: the most incomprehensible expression of His power, wisdom, holiness and love in what is wrought and brought to pass in

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[1] Ibid., p. 47.

[2] Ibid., p. 67.

> that world, and the exceeding greatness of the moral and natural good, the light, knowledge, holiness, and happiness which shall be communicated to it, and therefore to that magnificence of the world, height of heaven.[1]

It is virtually a confession of the "space-mystique." The experience of nature had been invested with the mantle of the numinous. "To Edwards," comments Perry Miller, ". . . his 'Images of Divine Things' was what the Prelude was to Wordsworth, a secret and sustained effort to work out a new sense of the divinity of nature and the naturalness of divinity."[2] The attempt to impose a scheme of spiritual truths upon the natural world meant, however, that the order of nature was itself elevated to a new meaning and importance. There is no more interesting and poignant evidence of the extent to which Edwards' imagination has been grasped by this new feeling toward creation than that contained in the brief note, "The Beauty of the World," which has been appended to Images and Shadows . . .

> Hence the reason why almost all men, and those that seem to be very miserable, live life, because they cannot bear to lose sight of such a beautiful and lovely world. The ideas, that every moment whilst we live have a beauty that we take not distinct notice of, brings a pleasure that, when we come to the trial, we had rather live in much pain and misery than lose.[3]

Edwards was probably unaware of the strain which this sentiment placed upon Puritan piety. In attempting to sound the depths of the divine in nature, Edwards was actually embracing a new form of piety. In discovering the God in "all nature," he was, in effect, turning his attention away from the God of the elect society. Creation itself, the wider context of divine activity, becomes a matter of prime importance. In fact,

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[1] Ibid., p. 134.

[2] "Introduction," p. 18.

[3] "The Beauty of the World," Images and Shadows, p. 137.

when Jonathan Edwards, Jr., came to assess his father's peculiar theological contribution, it was this matter which he fastened upon: "According to him, the declarative glory of God is the Creation . . . . The Creation, thus raised and preserved, is the Declarative Glory of God."[1]

It is in the Stockbridge writings that Edwards seems most freely to give expression to his "bold extension of vision." Behind him lay the vexing problems of the Northampton church society. He was able to take up the great theme of the "declarative glory of God" without the pressing need to adapt it to the needs of preaching and the demands of the church-covenant way. Among these writings "God's Chief End in the Creation of the World" is a striking effort to articulate the vision of divine glory in its pure expression. There is little cognizance given to the doctrine of election or the narrow terms of the spiritual life. There is no polemical thrust against some theological adversary. It is as if Edwards' mind had known release and was permitted an expression of sheer vision and delight. One is invited to observe from "above," as it were, as the divine glory communicates itself in creation.

God is great, Edwards declared, and in no wise dependent upon his creation; yet it is declared that God's activity will be in fidelity with himself. In view of the divine perfection it would be unthinkable that the creation should exhibit any disparity with the Good which is its source for that which he intends, that he effects.[2] As Edwards has it, "God esteems these attributes themselves valuable, and delights in them; so it is natural to suppose that he delights in their proper exercise and

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[1]Cited by Dwight, Works, I. 614.

[2]"Dissertation Concerning the End for which God Created the World," Works, III. 17.

expression."[1] Furthermore, if God is to be fully God his operations must be manifest. It is "a thing infinitely good in itself" that God's glory be known and, if known, then loved and relished. Thus the vision of glory becomes a great circle from God to the human heart from whence it is reflected back to God once more. "In the creature's knowledge, esteeming, loving, rejoicing in, and praising God, the glory of God is both exhibited and acknowledged; his fulness is received and returned. Here is both an emanation and remanation."[2] Hence God's respect to himself and to the creature's good are one and the same. The human good and the divine end are gathered up in one vision of perfection. So it seems that "God's last end, that there might be a glorious and abundant emanation of his infinite fulness of good ad extra . . . and that the disposition to communicate himself, or diffuse his own fulness, was what moved him to create the world."[3]

This was Edwards' most concentrated attempt to express the meaning of the divine glory. It is, of course, a classic illustration of what Lovejoy has termed the principle of plenitude.[4] As Edwards puts it, "the fulness of every perfection deems it right that this infinite fountain of good should send forth abundant streams."[5] But it is, at the same time, a commentary upon the "new sense" of glory with its feeling for the divine in all creation. In delighting in his own expression, God extends himself

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[1] Ibid., 19.

[2] Ibid., p. 84.

[3] Ibid., p. 20.

[4] Arthur O. Lovejoy, The Great Chain of Being (New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Brothers, 1960), p. 52.

[5] "Dissertation Concerning the End for which God Created the World," Works, III. 20.

in creation. The divine fulness unfolds itself in the abundance of nature. As Edwards sees it, God will faithfully express himself in creation. The end of creation is the glory of God, that is "the emanation and true external expression of God's internal glory and fulness . . . . Or, in other words, God's internal glory extant, in a true and just exhibition, or external existence of it."[1] In the language of emanation Edwards is describing the divine glory given "external expression" in all nature.

What is striking about "God's Chief End . . ." is the manner in which it shifts the emphasis from the God whose sovereignty is manifest in election to the God whose sovereignty is that of creation. It is not the God who sets apart saint from sinner but the all-comprehending God who manifests himself in creation. The final end is glory itself and the route by which this divine glory unfolds itself is from God through his works to the heart and back to God. "The beams of glory come from God, and are something of God, and are refunded back again to their original."[2] Edwards has set man within the widest possible context; it is the being which encompasses the sum total of created and uncreated substance. This is a shift of no small import, for creation is universal and applies to all. What now occupies the center of attention is not the matter of the gathered society of the elect but the universal society of being. Edwards has ceased to preoccupy himself with the problem of redemption, as it was framed by Puritan orthodoxy.

The companion piece,"The Nature of True Virtue," is a less abstract work dealing with the question of human virtue. It shares, however, many of the traits of "God's Chief End . . ." Especially are we

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[1] Ibid., p. 81.

[2] Ibid., p. 84.

made aware once more of Edwards' "bold extension of vision." The work was written as an answer to the moral sense theory developed by Francis Hutcheson. In his Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue Hutcheson had endeavored to fill a void left by Locke's removal of innate ideas. If there are no such innate norms, then on what grounds does man make his judgments of praise or blame? Shaftesbury had maintained that the source of moral judgments can only be found to lie in the moral condition of man. "These Distinctions," he wrote, "have their Foundation in Nature, the Discernment is natural, and From Nature alone . . . ."[1] Hutcheson carried on this line of thinking in his specification of a distinct inner sense which is the seat of moral discernment. Hutcheson reasoned that judgments of virtue are reached by a distinctive sense or "superior perception" just as one may exhibit a "good ear" for music.[2] As man possesses a sense for beauty, so also he possesses a moral sense rooted in his very constitution. Just as an object in a room is apprehended at once, so we are struck immediately by the beauty of form or virtue of action. For Hutcheson this moral sense was independent of desire or reflection; it possessed a priority over any determination of personal advantage or disadvantage.[3] It was direct, immediate and independent. "We mean by it only a determination of our minds to receive amiable or disagreeable ideas of actions, when they occur to our observation, antecedent to any opinions of advantage or loss to redound to ourselves from them; even as we are pleased with a regular form . . . without

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[1] Shaftesbury, Characteristicks, II. 214.

[2] Francis Hutcheson, An Inquiry into the Original of Our Ideas of Beauty and Virtue, (London, 1726), p. 9.

[3] Ibid., p. 10.

having any knowledge of mathematicks . . . ."[1] Between the world which gives itself to human perception and the moral sense within the locus of the self there is contained all that is necessary to the discernment of human good and evil.

It was a viewpoint not far removed from that of Edwards. In the sermon on "Divine Light" as well as in Religious Affections Edwards had stressed the direct and unmediated perception of divine things. Edwards could agree with Hutcheson that when an object appears to us with an agreeableness which we denominate as beauty, it does so as an immediate sensation and not by virtue of any chain of deductions. "The manner of being affected with the immediate presence of the beautiful idea, depends . . . on the frame of our minds, whereby they are so made that such an idea, as soon as we have it, is grateful or appears beautiful."[2] It is of interest that Edwards directs his criticism, not against the theory of moral sense itself, but rather against Hutcheson's delineation of beauty as uniformity in the midst of variety. Edwards grants a beauty which is manifest in regularity, uniformity and the like.[3] Beauty is to be discerned in the regularity of fine architecture, or in any natural agreement of form or design. And, similarly in regard to moral beauty, there is "a natural agreement and adaptedness of things that have relation one to another," for example, the conviction that one who does evil should receive retribution in return. "Indeed most of the duties incumbent on us, if well considered, will be found to partake of the nature of justice. There is some natural agreement of one thing to another; some adaptedness of the

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[1] Ibid., p. 135.

[2] "The Nature of True Virtue," Works, III. 152-153.

[3] Ibid., p. 110.

agent to the object; some answerableness of the act to the occasion; some equality and proportion in things of a similar nature, and of a direct relation one to another."[1] These are judgments arising out of a needful sense of harmony or regularity in human affairs. Justice is nothing other than a sense of "desert" by which order is maintained in society. It seems "no other than just, that as they love us and do us good, we also should love them and do them good."[2] So a sense of proportion prevails and this is indeed a kind of moral sense. It is not enough, however.

There is a higher beauty and a truer virtue than that proposed by Hutcheson. "Who will affirm, that a disposition to approve of the harmony of good music, or the beauty of a square or equilateral triangle, is the same with true holiness, or a truly virtuous disposition of mind."[3] It argues nothing for the goodness of a heart for it to acknowledge the beauty of a form. If such were true, the level of virtue would rise and fall with the degree of men's aesthetic appreciation. There is, to be sure, a sense of answerableness or desert but this is merely a secondary mode of beauty based upon uniformity and lacking any recognition of the will, the affections or the heart.[4] "But there is another and higher beauty in true virtue, and in all truly virtuous dispositions and exercises, than what consists in any uniformity or similarity of various things . . . ."[5] Edwards' task, then, was to set forth this other and

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[1] "The Nature of True Virtue," Works, III. 115.

[2] Ibid., p. 123.

[3] Ibid., p. 117.

[4] Ibid., p. 93-94.

[5] Ibid., p. 115.

higher beauty which was the substance of true virtue. This higher beauty rests in the exercise of the heart, in the "cordial agreement" of the heart, not to "particular beauty" but to a "general beauty." "And a general beauty is that by which a thing appears beautiful when viewed most perfectly, comprehensively and universally, with regard to all its tendencies, and its connections with every thing to which it stands related."[1] In other words, true virtue transcends the morality of desert, of common justice, even as the particular agreeableness of a balanced and symmetrical garden, in the eye of the beholder, is transcended by the grandeur of nature taken as a whole. "That only, therefore, is what I mean by true virtue, which, belonging to the heart of an intelligent being, is beautiful by a general beauty, or beautiful in a comprehensive view, as it is in itself, and as related to everything with which it stands connected."[2]

The higher beauty is that born of the consent of the heart to being in general. It is the relish of the divine glory for "God is not only infinitely greater and more excellent than all other being . . . he is the head of the universal system of existence . . . ."[3] This leads to the now famous definition: "True virtue most essentially consists in benevolence to being in general. Or perhaps, to speak more accurately, it is that consent, propensity and union of heart to being in general, which is immediately exercised in a general good will."[4] The true beauty which is also the truer virtue lies then in absolute devotion to the glory

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[1] Ibid., p. 94.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 103.

[4] Ibid.

of God. This distinction is by no means a casual one. Not only does it form the basis of the critique of Hutcheson but upon the discrimination of a higher divine sense rests a major portion of the argument of the Religious Affections.[1] It is maintained that the valid religious affection must be not merely a natural one but rather "spiritual, supernatural, and divine." The truly spiritual affections, like the higher beauty, are said to differ in degree and in kind from the commonplace notions of the heart. The contrast between the beauty graced by evidences of harmony and uniformity and the divine sense of glory is, then, not without sizable consequences.

What is at stake in Edwards' critique of Hutcheson, it will be recognized, is a theological problem of venerable lineage. It is the distinction between nature and grace, between the recognition of an order of natural consequence in which ordinary order prevails and a divine order transcending ordinary events and laws, in short, the order of glory. Puritan theologians had found the crux of the godly life to lie in that gift of grace which was never merely the outcome of a natural process. Grace might find its way through natural "means" but it was also an expression of that which was distinct from the natural order. As Western thinkers became increasingly convinced of the uniform and immutable character of natural law, they tended to transfer more and more of the divine activity to the realm of nature, thus making the juxtaposition of nature and grace increasingly uncertain. For many the distinction was very nearly lost. Edwards was determined to maintain it. It has been said that Hutcheson was seeking to remedy the loss of glory in the Newtonian

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[1] Religious Affections, p. 197.

world through a reconciliation of nature and grace.[1] Edwards seems in effect to be replying that this reconciliation has failed its purpose, for on the terms proposed by Hutcheson there was beauty but no glory. The Inquiry provided for a natural virtue but not for the virtue befitting a "new creation."

But if Edwards is attempting to preserve something of the old, and to him imperative, distinction between the ways of nature and those divine things which are more than nature, he is also taking us out of the Puritan order. The appeal to the "higher beauty" is taking us beyond the restricted meanings of the Puritan way even as for the nature enthusiasts the appeal to the sublime took them out of the framework of the old aesthetics, as Nicolson has noted. When Edwards relegates the ideals of aesthetic uniformity to the place of "secondary" or limited beauty, he is, in effect, undermining that desire for harmony and proportion which had been not only an aesthetic ideal but one of the very cornerstones of the edifice of the Puritan Holy Commonwealth. If there were a higher excellence than that given expression in the ideals of harmony and regularity, what then of the well ordered society of the saints? Edwards was convinced that the two sorts of beauty would not be at odds. The moral sense would ordinarily approve of the same things as the divine sense, 'though on different grounds.[2] Yet what is given in one paragraph is taken away in another, as Edwards endeavors to argue that the divine sense is utterly distinct. They are "entirely different principles."[3] The natural moral sense is narrow, a thing of limited beauty. They are

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[1] Albert J. Kuhn, "Glory or Gravity: Hutcheson versus Newton," Journal of the History of Ideas, XXII (July-September, 1961). 303.

[2] Ibid., p. 155.

[3] Ibid., p. 145.

private, not public, and by public Edwards does not mean, as Puritans usually did, a loyalty to the Holy Commonwealth in its visible expression. To Edwards this would be merely an extension of the natural conscience, a certain mutuality of affection. To him "public" means true virtue, that is, "an agreement or union of heart to the great system," benevolence to being in general.[1] This was something "quite different," "entirely diverse," from secondary beauty and the moral sense. It was an attempt to hold together an old world with the new, the world of stable orders, fixed obligations, unchanging aspirations, and definite status with another world of less rigidly established limitations and ever expanding vision. The higher beauty of "True Virtue" is not unrelated to the "unbounded views" of Addison and to Edwards' own appreciation of the vast panorama of nature in that they are recognitions of a new sense of enlargement. By embracing this recognition of a "higher beauty" as he does in his discussion with Hutcheson, he has, unwittingly perhaps, brought the vessel of the modern spirit into the very center of the house of Puritanism. The rift between the "secondary" beauty and the higher beauty was greater than he imagined. At any rate, the final impression left by the dissertation is one of "enlargement." One senses that he is breathing new air, and so it is. In "The Nature of True Virtue" we find that we are no longer standing in any clear relationship to the Puritan way. The very appeal to benevolence toward being in general seems tacit recognition of the dissolution of the more restricted patterns of the Holy Commonwealth. The heart has been placed in a larger society than the society of saints and man is being urged to determine himself in relationship to the boundless rather than to the bounded church-covenant

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[1] Ibid., p. 129.

way. In "The Nature of True Virtue" it becomes evident that Edwards has rearranged the contents of the Puritan mind and is articulating the terms of a new situation for man in his relationship to divine things. Benevolence toward being in general sets terms which are less restricted and circumscribed than those governing Winthrop's "city upon a hill." Not the perimeter of the society of saints, but the vast reaches of being in general define the sacred space in which man comes to terms with God. The providence of God will be less confined and more indeterminate. The human heart is set in a vaster world than earlier Puritans had believed. Man's destiny could no longer be defined by the limits of those meanings bound up with the concept of the elect society.

The building of the city of God had been the prime objective of those who brought Puritanism to Massachusetts Bay. The new world had provided them with an opportunity to establish the New Jerusalem without interference of King or Archbishop. There was no desire to enjoy the wilderness of America in itself. It was the "City upon a hill" which would subdue the wilderness, replacing it with a well ordered society wholly dedicated to God. This was entirely consonant with the ideal of the Holy Commonwealth and the interests of the mainstream of the Reformation. "The arena of Protestant combat," as George Williams has said, ". . . was the burger's walled town, not the monk's enclosed garden in the wilderness."[1] Calvin's Geneva had made a lasting impression upon later reformers. The sectaries, with their missionary wandering, their excessive zeal and their insistence upon full separation of church and state, had seemed to be both theologically unorthodox and socially irresponsible. The Puritans came to New England and built their closely knit

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[1]George Williams, Wilderness and Paradise in Christian Thought (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1962), 65.

towns on the foundations provided by the elect society.

Yet they could not be entirely unmindful of that vast and ungoverned world which surrounded them. The forest, said John Eliot, was a place of "hard labour, wants, and wilderness temptations."[1] Puritans were not dismayed by labor or sacrifice but they were uneasy about the temptations posed by the wilderness. Later generations could celebrate the "errand into the wilderness"[2] but within this enterprise there lay the danger "lest the enchantments of this world make them forget their errand into the wilderness."[3] Whether or not the forest always held enchantment, it did offer opportunities other than simply those attendant on the building of the New Jerusalem. Winthrop perhaps sensed this much when he cautioned his folk that their task was to construct a city where all would be knit together. When it was realized that banishment from the Puritan commonwealth was not to be counted "so much a confinement, as an enlargement,"[4] the foundations of the New Jerusalem began to crack. In Roger Williams the ideal of the holy city was rejected outright. It is here that the holy city of Puritan hopes comes into a clear conflict with the significance of nature. Never forgetting his own wilderness situation, Williams became the decisive expression of the growing crisis in Puritan

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[1] Cited by Williams, Ibid., p. 102.

[2] The title of Samuel Danforth's sermon, "A Recognition of New England's Errand into the Wilderness," cited by Mather, I. 64. Cf. Perry Miller, Errand into the Wilderness, chapter I.

[3] Mather, I. 65.

[4] John Cotton's defense of the banishment of Roger Williams includes the following: "The Jurisdiction (whence a man is banished) is but small, and the Countrey round it, large and fruitful: where a man may make his choice of variety of more pleasant, and profitable seats, then he leaveth behinde him. In which respect, Banishment in this countrey, is not counted so much a confinement, as an enlargement." Cited by Sidney Mead, The Lively Experiment, p. 13.

covenant thinking. In him the tie between the spiritual life and the *civitas* is broken. It was to him a mistake to construe the "garden and the wilderness, the church and the world" as one.[1] The world is itself not better than a wilderness, and the believer will have to make his way in it without recourse to the power of society. But Williams had become by virtue of his banishment an outsider to be regarded with aversion by the orthodox. It was not until the Great Awakening that the hold of the ideal of the Puritan *polis* was broken.[2] The Awakening, with its alarm and tumult, its atomization and emotionalism, was symptomatic of a faith that had forsaken the securities and restraints of the Holy City for a new venture of the spirit. It was this point, says Perry Miller, "at which the wilderness took over the task of defining the objectives of the Puritan errand."[3]

As a chief sponsor of that Awakening, Edwards must bear responsibility for that transition. Edwards was, of course, no Roger Williams turning the wilderness theme into an "incantation"[4] or gathering the rabble of some Rhode Island into a tempestuous experiment in democracy. He was an aristocrat in mind and temper, defending alike the privilege of the clergy and the ideal of the covenant society. His responses, as exemplified in the "bad book" controversy, were those of one who believed in the ideal of restraint; he lamented that the civil authority had not undertaken to promote the work of the revivals. In the end he sought to

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[1] "The Bloody Tenent of Persecution," cited by Perry Miller, *Roger Williams: His Contribution to the American Tradition* (New York: Atheneum, 1962), p. 145.

[2] Mead, p. 27.

[3] Miller, *Errand into the Wilderness*, p. 153.

[4] Miller, *Roger Williams*, p. 52.

turn back the clock by a century in attempting to restore the covenant profession of saving grace. Yet it was Edwards who brought to a climax the work that Roger Williams had begun. Williams invoked the imagery of the wilderness in opposition to that of "God's garden." Edwards turned to "All nature," "being in general," "universal existence," and, in effect, shifted the theological center of gravity from the elect society to the larger society of being. Both are in their peculiar ways articulating a new constitutive situation for piety. Edwards' "new sense" of glory, no less than Roger Williams' preoccupation with the wilderness, was a movement beyond the boundaries of the Puritan commonwealth. The drama of the soul had been carried to another and larger locus than that delineated by the community of saints.

The "enlargement" is most noticeable in the writing of the Stockbridge years, though it was by no means unique to that period. Thus there was a certain conformity between Edwards' mind and his circumstances in the frontier settlement. It was sixty miles from Northampton to Stockbridge. As Miller observed, it might have been six hundred. The measure of the distance was the contrast between the ideal of the church society of the Puritan town and that ill-defined community of the wilderness in which he took up residence and lamely attempted to minister to the Indians. Perhaps it was not evident to him that the "enclosed garden" of Puritanism was gone; but in any case the Stockbridge situation seemed to make available to him a breadth of view which had been lacking since his youth. As the banishment of Roger Williams to the wilderness turned out to be an enlargement, so the journey of Edwards to Stockbridge became for him a release into a wider world. It was here that he set forth once again the great theme of divine sovereignty with but little reference to the narrow provisions of the doctrine of election. In this solitude he exhibited

that "bold extension of vision" to which Lewis has drawn attention. Edwards' own religious experience had been decisively shaped by his awareness of a new sense of glory in all nature; his own unforgetable encounter with the divine presence had been associated with the wilderness solitude, and it was to such solitude that he returned throughout his life to sustain that vision. In more ways than one he had been born in the "Lord's Waste," and now he had returned to it. It was a movement which, judging from the works of that period, was for Edwards an undeniable enlargement.

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSION

Edwards was responding to two differing notions of the divine, two "gods," as it were. One was the sovereign God whose prime characteristic was his division of mankind into elect and non-elect. This was the God of tradition, in particular Calvinistic Puritanism. It was the God whose most significant point of contact with man was the holy community, the society of the saints. This, the historical manifestation of the redeeming activity of God, was never felt to be, of course, precisely identical with the city of God. Puritans liked to remind the world that they were not perfectionists. There was no infallible manner of knowing who were and who were not among the elect; yet Puritanism in New England had been concerned to make the invisible church as visible as possible and had devised tests to that end. Thus, the doctrine of election, especially as developed within the Puritan holy commonwealth, led to a certain duality. The Puritan was inclined to accent the distinction between nature and grace; he attempted to draw the line more sharply between elect and non-elect; he sought to build the divinely ordained order in the midst of the world's disorder. He tended to emphasize restraint rather than comprehension; the established order rather than the overly zealous pursuit of perfection. His goal was that of Winthrop's "city upon a hill." When Edwards experienced the presence of God he assumed it to be this god, the God who in the mystery of his providence elects some and rejects others and so divides and orders mankind.

There were, however, intimations of another sort of God in the "Personal Narrative." It was the God of "all nature," the God whose prime characteristic was perhaps less that of sovereignty than of omnipresence. The most significant point of contact with this God was in nature and in this experience was discovered a new range of emotions and a new way of seeing divinity.

> So that when we are delighted with flowery meadows and gentle breezes of wind we may consider that we only see the emanations of sweet benevolence of Jesus Christ. When we behold the fragrant rose and lily, we see his love, and purity. So the green trees and fields, and singing of birds are the emanations of his infinite joy and benignity . . . . The christal [sic] rivers and murmuring streams have the footsteps of his sweet grace and beauty. When we behold the light and brightness of the sun, the golden edges of an evening cloud, or the beauteous bow we behold the adumbrations of his glory and goodness . . . .[1]

It is a different divinity. As Haroutunian has commented, "It is as though Edwards' spirit had escaped the ravages of 'original sin.'"[2] It was a religious sensibility which seems to be remarkably similar to one which is to be found among the nature enthusiasts in England from More to Shaftesbury. This tendency here is to move from limitation to enlargement, from restraint to enthusiasm. The God of the "new sense" of glory was a God shaped in part by the new world of philosophy. Edwards' vital encounter with the omnipresence of God was to occur against the background of his interest in the natural philosophy of Newton, an interest which began early in life and reached its zenith during his college years. Through these studies he came to that ecstatic conclusion that "Space is God." The significance of that daring conclusion can hardly be overestimated, for it opened to the youthful student a new range of sensibility.

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[1] Miscellanies, 108.

[2] Cf. Joseph Haroutunian's preface to Elwood, p. lx.

This new range of sensibility is suggested in Edwards' religious experience with its encounter with the omnipresence of God in "all nature." It is an experience, moreover, which links Edwards to the emergence of Romanticism. It is an experience which is antithetical to the fundamental propositions of the Puritan way.

Here, in nascent form, was a conflict that was to become central in American thought.[1] On the one hand, there was the God of tradition invoking a sense of limitation, referring to a fixed order; on the other, the experience which stands over against the tradition. It is a tension between form and dynamics, between the life of the spirit according to an attested paradigm and that life as an individual journey of discovery. Edwards did not resolve this tension. Both of these themes continue to run together throughout the course of his career. They can be found side by side in the Miscellanies, in the Northampton period and in the Stockbridge writings. The delineation of the meaning of "Excellency," for example, seems to point toward the notion of the Holy Commonwealth with its language of consent. At the same time, the society of being which is here in view is not so much the society of the church covenant as that society which is being in general, the "university of things."

It is tempting to speculate, however, about the shape of Edwards' thought had he not taken responsibility for the church-covenant way in its historical predicament. Emerson, for instance, knew a tension of thought, a conflict between the freedom of the individual and a demand for

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[1] "Indeed, the history of American life can be viewed as a struggle to maintain order and a sense for tradition while holding to an ever more self-conscious affirmation of the supremacy of experience." John E. Smith, The Spirit of American Philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), p. 73.

the "Absolute unity of mankind."[1] But Emerson carefully refrained from putting his thoughts to a concrete test. He left his pulpit at an early date and kept at a safe distance from the Brook Farm experiment. He preferred to work in a larger arena. It is at least possible that the tension in Edwards' thought would not have become so critical had he not been thrust into the very concrete affair of the church society. The atmosphere was already heavily charged. The imprecatory style and the "harvest" technique had been prepared in advance. The materials for the revival were already at hand. In this sense the installation at Northampton was fateful in Edwards' career. It compelled him to transform his early "idealism" into a metaphysics of conversion. Edwards had already worked out the framework of his "ideal system of existence." It bore, to be sure, many marks of Edwards' Puritan background. It set forth the vision of the sovereign God who was the very structure of being, and in the relationships of the universe had rediscovered the holy commonwealth of being. But it was, nevertheless, an undeniable enlargement of viewpoint. It was a viewpoint quite similar, as commentators have generally suggested, to the writing of the Stockbridge period. If Edwards had not found his way to Northampton, it is possible that his development might have run along these lines. As it was, Edwards poured nearly all of his energies into the revival of the church-covenant way. His "new sense" of glory with its enthusiasms was translated into the enthusiasm of the awakening. The notion of divine excellence became the grounds for frightening people into salvation. The sense of divine immediacy, which had emerged together with his study of the new philosophy, added an eschatological urgency to revival preaching. Edwards bent all of his

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[1]Loren Baritz, City Upon a Hill, p. 257.

efforts toward the end of reinforcing the stringent terms of the God of election. The material was there and Edwards made the most of it. The "new sense" of glory was called upon to fan the fires of the Great Awakening.

The experiment came to an end and Edwards went to Stockbridge and subsequently returned to the higher ground which he had begun to explore in earlier years. It is there that he turns again to the larger society of being. The difficulty had been resolved for him by the action of the Northampton congregation. Released from the entanglements of the elect society, Edwards turned again to the greater vision of being in general. Behind him was Winthrop's "city upon a hill," and beyond the perimeter of his vision lay Emerson's appeal from "city estimates of great and small" to the majestic forest.[1] Edwards was neither a Winthrop nor an Emerson, but he had something in common with each. Indeed, his career exhibits a tension between the ideals represented by these two figures, the Puritan and the Transcendentalist. It is perhaps unfortunate that Edwards did not hear Parrington's "call" to be a Transcendentalist but he did not seem born for that vocation. Instead, he articulated other visions of beauty and terror and the consequences of those visions would long echo in the course of American thought.

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[1]"Nature," Basic Selections from Emerson, ed. Eduard C. Lindeman (New York: Mentor Books, The New American Library, 1954), p. 11.

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